This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES
3 3433 07479383 1

The CAVE MAN

The CAVE MAN

813

By

John Corbin

D. APPLETON AND COMPANY
NEW YORK
1907

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY
385363A
ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS
R 1928 L

COPYRIGHT, 1907, BY
THE CURTIS PUBLISHING COMPANY

COPYRIGHT, 1907, BY
D. APPLETON AND COMPANY

Published April, 1907

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

TO

FREDERICK TREVOR HILL

IN GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT

OF A DEBT TO HIM AND TO

"THE MINORITY"

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	FACING PAGE
Judith . . . . . (*Frontispiece*)	
"A young girl had peered at him from a passing automobile"	16
"A solitary man sat, vague image of desolation" .	152
"They had turned and were walking away" . .	212

THE CAVE MAN

CHAPTER I

"THERE he is, Mr. Onderdonk!" said the younger Miss Sears. "Your cousin! Oh, *do* go out and get him!" She sat in a window seat in Holworthy Hall, clasping her knees in her hands, and looking out upon the Class-Day crowd in what Harvard men call the Yard. "I *know* I shall love him again!"

"Again?" asked Onderdonk. "Wistar!" His glance followed hers.

Wistar was just below them, standing in a group of graduates of ten years past who were greeting one another with old friendship, now and then shouting the number of their year to summon others of the class. He was tall, and, as it seemed to the young people, overserious; though when he gripped the hand or put an arm upon the shoulder of an old classmate in the throng his face lighted pleasantly.

Onderdonk turned upon her an inquiring glance.

"I could do it in a minute," she said. "I did love him once, years and years ago, when I was

in short skirts and sandals. He was my sister's; but she wouldn't have him. I was jealous—and furious with her, too, for sending him away. Do get him!"

Instead of obeying her, he gathered the unaccustomed folds of his graduating gown about him and sat down where he could look her full in the face.

"He's six feet tall," she pleaded, "and he has the *loveliest* gray eyes!"

Onderdonk laughed at her, as she had meant him to; but for the first time in his life he wondered what his own eyes were like, and felt the lack of an inch. "I asked him here, and he knows the room. I can't grab him like an ol' clo'es puller in."

"If you can't tell people what to do"—with a glance at the crimson tassel of the mortar board on his knee—"what's the use of being the Class-Day Marshal?"

By virtue of his office, Onderdonk was responsible for the orderly conduct of the day's exercises, the contentment of some hundreds of classmates who were fellow-hosts with him, and the happiness of the thousands of their guests. But he sat unmoved, lost in the intimacy of teasing.

"Besides," she pursued, "he's your cousin. If I were marshal, that's the very best thing I'd do—marshal my relatives."

"You have some particular reason for wanting Wistar. I'll get him—if you'll tell me what it is."

"I told you."

"You can do that better if you don't see him."

"My, what a jealousness!" She laughed at him in turn, as he in turn had intended. "But I *have* a reason, and I'll tell you—if you promise to help me." She leaned toward him with an air of confidence. "You have met Mr. Penrhyn," she said with a side slant of her head toward a table in the far corner where her elder sister was serving tea to two men. "What do you think of him?"

"A good chap, I should say." As he spoke, Penrhyn laughed heartily at something Miss Sears had said. "I like his laugh." She was silent, however, and Onderdonk added: "Of course I've only just met him."

"Do you know why he brought father, Judith and me up here from New York?"

"Out of kindness to me."

She nodded a "thank you." "In the first place, on business—the combination in motor cars, you know. Mr. Wistar has refused to go into it, and he wants to get at him through you." She paused, conscience-stricken. "Am I very bad to tell you? I'm not supposed to know anything about it. And you are a stranger—almost."

"Such thanks for the 'almost'!" His man-

ner had been half satirical, half caressing, but now of a sudden it took a serious turn. "That's what Wistar meant!" he said, taking a letter from his pocket. "Only a few hours ago I got this, telling me he'd be here—on business!"

Onderdonk had inherited an interest in the establishment of which his cousin was the head. Some months before, he knew, Mr. Sears and Mr. Penrhyn had attempted to consolidate the industry; but Wistar, who was perhaps the ablest and most successful manufacturer in the field, was also a stanch opponent of modern business consolidations, and had refused to join. Without him, Onderdonk had supposed, the attempt had been abandoned. "Isn't that like him?" he concluded. "He'd clean forgotten that he'd promised to be here for Class Day!"

"All I'm interested in," she said, "is that Mr. Penrhyn is so much with my sister. Oh," she broke off, "I know you're laughing at me! But other girls have their mother to manage, and she's all I've ever had!" She did not, however, lose sight of her purpose. "You know we're poor, don't you?"

He nodded.

"We're very poor. Once, you know, we weren't poor. But father has an eye for what they call gilt-edge investments."

He smiled tentatively.

"You mustn't laugh at him," she protested, looking about at her father's refined and sensitive face. Onderdonk was humbly silent, and she ran on: "He really has had *splendid* ideas! Only things are so contrary—the moment father has proved how they ought to happen, and financed a company, they up and do just the opposite."

He was soberly attentive now, and the result was that the lights danced in her eyes.

"You see what a powerful financier he is. By a single investment he has always been able to shift the course of progress."

He laughed, and then she became serious again.

"I'm *horrid* to talk about him so. Judith would die and go to the poorhouse before she'd let him suspect she had lost faith in him. And now it's this promotion of Mr. Penrhyn's."

"You don't believe in it?" His tone approved her disbelief. The paternal business, which had begun with the manufacture of bicycles, had suffered from one of the earliest excesses of trust-manipulation.

"If it turns out like the rest—but that's not what bothers me. Mr. Penrhyn manages to see so much of my sister that everybody is saying they're engaged."

"And my cousin?"

"What is it you call it in football? Breaking up the interference?"

He looked about with interest. Penrhyn's eyes were alert with intelligence; but his light-brown hair waved almost trivially upon his forehead, and there was a dimple, in fact a cleft in his chin.

"For such a long time now Judith hasn't gone out at all. At first it didn't matter, for people came to us. But they *would* fall in love with her. And when they have got through proposing they don't come any more. Now, sometimes, I think she is lonesome. Mr. Penrhyn is the only one who never gets discouraged. You can't lose *him*! And then he's so interested in father—perhaps you don't know how things like that make you fond of people? Boyser—that's our maid—says Judith is just the kind to go over the whole woodpile and pick out a crooked stick at last. Sometimes I think she must have forgotten what a really nice fellow is like. Your cousin *is* a nice fellow?"

"*Now* I can tell you the truth. He's more than a nice fellow." He paused—an artist in search of the one and only word. "He's the real thing!" he said. "Is it a bargain—about breaking up the interference?"

"Yes, and a secret!" There was still enough of the small girl in her to find joy in sworn confidences. She reached out her hand, and they gripped like black conspirators. The afternoon sun, as it struck down through the little antique

panes of spun glass, showed the coursing of blood beneath the firm, satin surface of her cheeks. He blushed like a boy, the strong, rich color glowing deep beneath a surface of tan.

The third marshal burst in on them and seized Onderdonk by the shoulder. "Hang it, Donky!" he said. "We've waited for you half an hour. You're holding up the whole shooting match!" Becoming aware of the other occupants of the room he hesitated, but ended by haling Onderdonk out through the door. The third marshal made up in zeal what his office lacked in distinction.

Little Miss Sears laughed to herself, and said "Donky!" Then she repeated the word, as if its sound were a pastoral symphony, a midsummer night's dream of thistles and he-haws. But the face she turned toward the window was serious enough, and when she saw Onderdonk break loose from his sergeant long enough to pass a word to Wistar she gripped her own right wrist and shook her hand to him—the black hand of conspiracy.

What Onderdonk had said was that his party —names unnamed—had asked to have Wistar presented, and that as his seat at the Stadium was next theirs, he'd better wander upward in a hurry, if he didn't want to stand on exhibition as a social quitter.

The younger Miss Sears met Wistar on the landing, and greeted him most cordially, if briefly. As she led him in to Judith, she put a wrap on his arm and warned him that her sister was in danger of her life from catching cold. Then she attached herself to Penrhyn and her father. "You have both of you neglected me shamefully," she said, and led them down the winding staircase into the college yard. As she hurried them along the pavement outside she noted with inward triumph that Judith and Wistar were not following.

CHAPTER II

MISS SEARS looked at Wistar with interest, as if to recall a fading memory. She remembered him as a very earnest young man—and she had been at the age when one does not value earnestness in young men. Now, though he seemed almost as young as ever, he impressed her as even more earnest; but to her surprise she became gradually aware that his was a face of some distinction. In brow, cheek bone and chin there was enough prominence to suggest native, almost primitive, strength. The lips were firmly modeled, and the dark-gray eyes were deep and grave.

"Miss Sears!" he had said, as his fingers touched hers at the meeting. And then, even after the others had gone, he said no more.

"May told you it was I!" Mistress of herself though she was, his silence put her ill at ease. And then, as he still did not speak, "You remember me?" she added, with a step toward the door.

He stood motionless. "Remember you! Have you forgotten!"

"Oh, a girl knows! After much less than—How many? Almost ten years!—they are usually married, and fathers of large and prosperous families. They are caught on the rebound, as Meredith puts it—by some much nicer person!"

"*They*?" he questioned. "It is a charming vista you open up with that simple pronoun. Are there so many of them? And are they all—as Meredith might say—bounders?"

"I'm very fond of them. I resent your tone of superiority!"

"Then consider me a bounder like the rest, and be fond of me!"

The portentousness of his manner had vanished. In each of his lean cheeks, she observed, was a mobile hollow, which contrasted curiously with the intentness of the face as a whole, and which, as he smiled to her, cast the aura of cheerfulness upon his lips, of sweetness into his eyes.

She laughed, triumphant.

"A pretty speech!" she said. "From you—who have neglected me for years!"

"Neglected you?"

"You gave up polo—I used to love to see you play polo. And they say you never dine out any more!"

As a young graduate, Wistar had gone in for the brilliant life of New York with a vigor and success characteristic of whatever he did. But his purpose had been simply to be thrown with her; and when she was lost to him, all that was left in life, he felt, was to crush out the memory of her with work.

"It's my business," he said—"the machine shops and garages. I haven't time for anything else."

"Do you mean that—literally?"

"Sometimes I get to the club for dinner. Oftener, I have it brought in where I'm working."

She looked at him, incredulous, horror-struck. "Dinner in a stuffy, noisy machine shop, in an ill-smelling garage! How can a real man live like that? It is the life of a cave man!"

"A cave man? Yes, perhaps! And you—you also disappeared. I used to love to see *you*—in kid and satin, with one of those osprey spray things up on top. If you'll tell me why you disappeared, I'll tell you why I—am a cave man."

"To ride always on borrowed mounts, to be always the guest, never the host—it wasn't pleasant. And you?"

"At about that time I began to find my cave less lonesome than the gay world." The smile flickered out of his cheeks, giving way to the habitual sadness. Then, as if commanding a lighter

mood, he added: "It seems I'm the only one of them all—I beg pardon—of all of *us*!—who's the least bit constant."

"We've never met a score of times!"

"It was only eleven."

"A wonderful memory! And yet—only eleven times! I feel more than ever that you've neglected me."

"You forget how often I—you know!—made my little petition! Five times—not counting twice when you managed to sidetrack me."

"Five times in eleven meetings!" she laughed. "It sounds delightful! Why did you stop?"

The smile had been coming and going as he spoke, like heat lightning in an overcast sky. Now again his face became dark. "I used to bore you," he said.

"No, not just *bore* me. You used to frighten me."

He echoed the word in surprise.

"You're rather abrupt and masterful, aren't you? It's a way with—cave men. That was lucky for me! If you'd been as you are to-day, no girl as young as I was then could have resisted you!"

He paused to consider what she might mean. "I understand," he said at last, "and I thank you."

"*What* do you understand?"

He paused a moment and then said simply, "Penrhyn."

His laconic directness startled her: she recalled that it had always done so. "You've heard that? You, the cave man?"

"To be accurate, I saw it in the paper."

Quickly recovering herself, she answered with noncommittal lightness: "When you wish to be accurate—you consult the newspapers?"

"For ten years I've read the dreary social column for that one item. Whenever such a thing is true, won't you write me just a little note? Imagine what it is for a man to read his own death notice—and in the marriage column!"

She seemed as if about to answer, but did not.

They had been standing by a window through which came the sound of seniors cheering things in general about the old class tree. Now the procession started round the Yard on the way to the Stadium, and Onderdonk solemnly led a cheer for each of the college buildings as they passed.

"Come!" she said. "We're supposed to get there before them."

As they stepped out on the rough granite steps, the column paused in front of Holworthy and raised a lusty yell. It was a severely simple building, that looked all of its two hundred years.

If this cheering had been a part of the day's

exercises in Wistar's time he had forgotten it. "Nobody told me they would do that!" he said, with a shrug of half-humorous complaint.

"You find it absurd?"

"I once heard a ticket chopper in the Subway call a gang of undergraduates 'rah-rah boys.'"

"Aren't you cynical? I find rah-rah boys charming."

"You quoted Meredith just now. Do you remember his description of a party of English folk going into conventional raptures over the sunset? He questioned what the sensations of the sun might be, contemplating the party of English folk. Very much the same, I suppose, as those of Holworthy Hall on being cheered by the seniors. It makes me feel very old. Perhaps I oughtn't to have come."

"Then why did you?"

"The reason is personal." But, as the reply sounded more forbidding than he intended, he added: "Personal to you."

If he had expected thus to dismiss the subject he had miscalculated. "I don't see how that can be," she said, "since you had to be dragged in to see me."

"I hadn't meant to come at all."

"Not come to your cousin's Class Day?"

"I had forgotten it."

She eyed him with suspicion.

"I've had long practise in forgetting. Cave men, you know, are brave about mastodons and hairy mammoths, but they have a primeval terror of—this sort of thing."

He looked about the yard, which was alive with bevies of women, mostly very young and in the gayest of summer frocks.

"But your cousin is first marshal!" Her suspicion changed to reprobation.

Sheepishly, he hung his head; but the hollows in his lean cheeks beamed shamelessly. "That's why it was so very clever of me to be able to forget it."

"Yet you came?"

"As I said, the reason is personal." Even yet, in his simplicity, he relied on the fact to dismiss the subject.

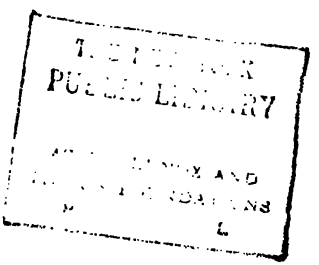
"Perhaps that ought to lessen my curiosity. But it doesn't."

Still he hesitated. The business that had brought him from New York was, in a sense, personal to her. Her father and Mr. Penrhyn had of late given evidence that they were in earnest in their effort to combine the makers of motor cars—evidence so unmistakable that a number of manufacturers who, like himself, were opposed to the project, had formed a counter combination and asked him to take control of it. Before consenting, he had felt obliged to consult his cousin.

But this was not what he now referred to. As he had stood waiting in Boston for the trolley out to Cambridge, a young girl had peered at him from a passing automobile, and he had recognized Miss Sears's sister, May, whom he had last seen bare-legged, and with childish yellow curls bobbing on her shoulders. Two of the party in the car were the hostile promoters. The fourth was veiled; but in every outline he had recognized Miss Sears. At the thought that she had passed so close to him he had felt a strange delight in his heart, like that which falls upon the ear at the unexpected murmur of silken garments. Then came a little shock of pain. For the first time he realized that this woman whom he had loved and lost was nearing thirty. Even to the rarest womanly character, he felt, the passing of youth was a tragedy. He had tasted deep and bitter waters of life. Had she done so, too? When his car came, it bore on the dashboard a legend that jogged remembrance —Harvard Class Day. For years she had been to him a mere memory, unchanged as it was beautiful. Now, in the gay throngs, he might see her unseen, and read in her face the record of that deeper inward being, which is the recompense life brings to the few for the gladness it takes from all.

"I promise not to be embarrassed," Miss Sears presently prompted him.

"A young girl had peered at him from a passing automobile."


PUBLIC LIBRARY

"I wanted to see what the years have done to you." He turned his eyes full upon her. Her abundant hair, which was light brown with broad flames of gold where the sun struck upon it, framed a delicate, clear-cut face, vigorous as ever, and with the dewy freshness and flush radiance of a flower.

She met his glance quite frankly, and without resentment. "Go on!" she said.

"There is really no change. Your color is even more vivid than it used to be."

"Stupid!" she exclaimed. "I'm blushing!"

He kept his eye upon her, and saw her color deepen.

"Are you trying to cheer me," she asked, "as the rah-rah boys cheer the ancient college buildings?"

He shook his head. "I don't find what I hoped."

"And that is——?"

"To every face, sooner or later, the years bring one or two changes—the change which destroys youthful beauty, or that which leads it forward to the beauty of maturity and age."

She gave an actual, physical start. "And which have I?"

"Neither, as yet. Ten years have left you where you were."

She laughed outright, and exclaimed a little

harshly: "You tell me that I look eighteen, but it is as if you said that I am remarkably well preserved!" She hurried along the brick walk that skirts the yard, toward the straggling rear of the procession on its way to the Stadium, and he followed in silence.

As long as he had remembered her in the glamour of his distant memories, he had not really believed that she could have any genuine feeling for a man like Penrhyn. But with this intrusion of what seemed a touch of the commonplace came also a doubt and a fear. There are avenues of the mind along which the most dignified are open to jealousy.

They were walking now along the rods of broad canvas spread out to protect white slippers and skirts from the summer dust. As they crossed the bridge over the Charles, Judith spoke of the association of the place, familiar to the long friendship of Longfellow and Lowell. "Smooth as our Charles," she quoted.

His answer harked back to their previous conversation. "I am sorry you took what I said as you did."

"It *was* unfair. I had promised."

"Not so unfair to me as to yourself—to your old self, as I once knew you! I spoke of things as they are—to those who look upon life simply. Your answer was as conventional as the women

of the stage, or the comic papers. What has happened to change you? There was a time when you would not have spoken so."

"There was a time when I was too young to fear 'what the years might bring.'"

"I had hoped you would always be too young for that. Only those who are already old fear to lose the semblance of youth."

She looked at him, her color mounting again, but not from embarrassment. "There was a time when you would not have been positively, intentionally rude!"

He met her glance, accusing and masterful. "I spoke honestly. Not to do so is the only thing I count rude."

Her eyes flashed into his. "I *am* afraid to grow old!" she said. "Or rather, as you so accurately put it, I am afraid to *seem* to grow old. But not for the reason you imagine! You speak of 'things as they are.' How do you presume to know what they are?"

It was the first time he had ever seen her angry, and, by some occult working of his nature, the sight filled him for the first time with a sense of power. "All that I said, I know," he answered. "If there is anything else——?"

"There is my father!" She told him of his repeated failures, and his dogged efforts to retrieve them. As she spoke, her voice softened,

and with little unconscious touches she revealed a wealth of filial loyalty and affection.

Wistar did not at first catch her drift; but he was none the less interested. He had himself been a devoted son.

"Time and again I have begged him to give up affairs. The last time things went wrong, a year ago, almost nothing was left but what was mine—the house we live in, and ever so little besides. It made him wretchedly unhappy. I was worried, and must have looked ill. Somehow he came to believe that I was old. I *am,* you know —you are right! He thought I was worried for myself: with his old-fashioned ideas about girls, he never understands why I haven't married." She stopped as if to consider what she had said, what she might say.

The jealousy of which Wistar was only half conscious was yet strong enough to quicken every faculty. Why had she not married? And how was the fact that she had not related to this affair with Penrhyn? A year ago, he remembered, Sears had shot himself through the shoulder. There had been talk of attempted suicide; but the fact that his daughter was with him at the time, and that the ball, as it seemed, had not been directed toward a vital part, was taken as proof that the shot was accidental. Wistar wondered whether things had happened just as the world believed.

Some weak men take their lives from disappointed ambition. More, and more generous, men reach the final despair through failure in the cause of those they love.

"He promised to retire then," Judith continued in a lighter tone, "but presently he went in for this new idea, which he thinks the best of all."

"And you gave—what you have—to help him?"

"That was easily done. What I find hard is to keep up his courage through it all—to make him not be afraid of failure. As long as he believes I'm not faded and ugly—that some one may yet be induced to marry me!—he thinks I'm provided for. Oh, *I* know the things that keep your skin fresh and soft! *I* wear a motor veil! *I'm* careful in the matter of beauty sleep! After this venture, if it succeeds, the lines may sink in as they please—or as you wish!"

Again came the thought of Penrhyn. "And if it fails?"

"It won't fail. But if it does, there's still rouge, and then enamel! You don't think father would know the difference?"

"He would," said Wistar, again accusing, "for the difference would be in you."

Her resentment rose again, though this time veiled in mockery. "You serious man!" she laughed. "You are shocked! Don't forget

that there are those of us for whom to grow old gracefully and at leisure is a luxury unattainable. When you see painted women at the theater, remember that!"

"Stop—please!"

"Or, at the worst, there is still the alternative of marriage!"

The thrust was no doubt unintentional. But none the less it went home.

CHAPTER III

THE solid cement arches of the Stadium loomed before them, vast as those of the Coliseum, with the grain of the rough board matrices still evident in the gray-white surface. Mounting one of the many staircases within the soaring gloom, they emerged again into the gay sunlight, and found their party seated in the front row. May so managed that she and Penrhyn sat on one side of Sears, with Judith and Wistar on the other. Then she quite shamelessly devoted herself to her father, leaving Penrhyn alone in the midst of the college world to which he was a stranger.

The huge structure, built like a letter U about the football field and running track, was far too large for even that considerable gathering. The curved end of it, as it happened, had lately been used for the production of a Greek tragedy in the manner of the Theater of Dionysus, and the façade of the Palace of Agamemnon was still standing in all the rich brilliancy of Attic color. The Class-Day guests filled every seat to the

lofty skyline, and the predominance of young girls in summer costume gave the effect of a gigantic bed of white tulips scattered with variegated color.

Already the seniors had taken their place in the center of what in classic phrase would be called the orchestra; and the graduates were filing in in the order of their classes, and squatting on the ground in a circle about them. Prominent among these were the classes that had come back for their reunions of three years, ten years, fifteen years, twenty-five years, and even fifty years after graduation. As the youthful triennials entered with measured tread they all at once lifted their hats to the ladies, swept them grandly to the left, to the right, then upward and down to the ground with a magnificent bow. There was a ripple of subdued laughter at the intentional absurdity of it, and then the classes already sitting rose and welcomed the newcomers with a cheer.

In the section in which Onderdonk's party sat there was an unusual number of men, and they overheard some one behind them exclaim: "We ought to return the compliment. There's Jimmy Wistar. It's up to him to lead!" After a moment a voice with a trace of excited brogue shouted, "James, old man! Raise a racket, can't you?"

Wistar was on his feet in an instant. "Pe-

dey!" he cried. His long arm reached over two rows, and he grasped the fist of the stocky Irishman, who was seated with a party of homely, if rather showily dressed, women folk. When Wistar sat down he was beaming with good-fellowship. "That's the finest lad in the world," he said, "and the best quarterback!"

"Then why is it up to you to lead the cheering?" asked Judith quizzically. The incident, trifling as it was, reminded her of a fact which Wistar's modesty always made her forget—that he was a man of some distinction; and his recent remarks to her had, among other things, quickened her interest in him.

"It isn't up to me. It's up to Pedey Ryan. He's the man that scored the touchdown in the first game we had won from Yale in fifteen years, and by a plan he got out of his own head, too!"

Judith asked for particulars.

"He showed me how to make a hole for him, and when the time came he shot through it like a bullet and over the goal line."

"But it was you who made the hole?"

"The regular guard was laid up. I was never a real football man. Besides, Pedey served through the Cuban war—a Rough Rider. And since then he's been mixed up in all sorts of South American revolutions—a general and a statesman!"

The decennials came around the corner of the Palace of Agamemnon, and cries for "Jimmy Wistar" rose from several sides.

"Yet they all seem to know you?"

"They only think they do. No one who knows me ever calls me Jimmy. I'm a very serious person. They always call me James—me and the footman."

As the decennials saluted the ladies, the cry, "Jimmy Wistar, give them a cheer!" was taken up by several men in chorus. Wistar turned again upon Ryan. "You lead, Pedey," he commanded. "They all know you!" Then he said to Judith: "I haven't been back in ten years—since I graduated."

Ryan got up and spoke rebukingly.

Wistar's reply was to march up the aisle and pull him out to the front row. "Now do your duty!" he said.

But the little man gripped the big one around the body in an arm of steel, and while he called for a cheer held him standing.

The leader of the decennials—Wistar's class—recognized them as he passed, and called on his classmates for a cheer for Wistar and Ryan. "You fellows know why!" he added.

Wistar shrank into his seat.

"Ye're right to be ashamed of yerself!" Ryan cried, relapsing further into the bogs of his

brogue. "You who for ten long years have niver lifted your v'ice for the dear old plass!" Then his eye fell upon Penrhyn, and a thing happened which, though Wistar was now scarcely aware of it, he remembered by and by with the utmost vividness. Ryan offered Penrhyn his hand in the manner of an old friend, and was met with a look of studied distance and indifference.

Wistar perforce led the cheering alone. He soon caught the spirit of the moment. When two old boys of the class of fifty years gone by passed them, erect and conscious, he called for three times nine, and after he had led the long cheer, eager and enthusiastic, yet precise in the count, he was hoarse.

"Who's the rah-rah boy now?" Judith demanded. Her eyes were shining, but her voice still had a trace of acid.

"You are right!" said Wistar huskily. "I haven't had so much fun since——"

"Since when?"

"For ten years."

"Since you were here before," she said.

This time Wistar did not need to be told that she was blushing.

In a moment, however, she rallied. "I wonder," she said demurely, "when it is a man who has missed 'the beauty of maturity and age,' whether there isn't some paint or enamel of the

spirit that will keep him from appearing stupidly cynical."

"I shall have need to put it on, in the spirit, when you put it on the flesh."

The ivy orator spoke his piece, and among other pleasantries, apologized for the recent presence of such a matron as Mrs. Agamemnon in such a place as Cambridge. There were songs from the Glee Club, and finally Onderdonk got up and called for cheers for the four leading varsity teams. When he came to the eleven, he gave way to the second marshal; and what was really an act of modesty reminded everybody that in this very field he had shown himself one of the pluckiest and most brilliant halfbacks of the year. Then he called for a cheer for the nine, taking pains to describe it as The Baseball Team. This almost broke the jaws that shouted it; and when the eminent and long-practiced leader of the graduates got up to repeat the cheer in order, he said, "Three times three for the *Nine*." In the cheer that followed the word came out sharp and strong—and there was a burst of laughter from the undergraduates at the expense of the eminent graduate. "Nine" meant the freshman class of '09. When the laughter subsided, the leader of the freshmen got up, and with elaborate mockery led a return cheer for the graduates.

All of a sudden the air lighted up with showers of Japanese paper confetti and serpentine streamers. The wind was softly blowing, and as it eddied about the scenic palace and into the vast semicircle of the Stadium it sent the brilliant missiles swirling and floating on high. It was as if a summer breeze had run riot in the rainbow, and was scattering its shimmer of fragments in sport. Even the two oldest graduates tossed up radiant handfuls amid aged smiles. The more recent graduates bombarded the ladies with tubes of confetti and wads of streamers caught up from the ground. A carnival of indiscriminate gallantry sprang up—or rather, of discriminate gallantry, for one pelted one's neighbor for the best and most sufficient reason that one liked the looks of her.

A few of the young women in the front seats became special targets for the surging mob below. Judith defended herself, laughing. But May, reckless of all consequences to her clothes, seized the paper and hurled it back—with the result that her hat was soon awry and her hair powdered with variegated spangles and stars. The wads of brilliant paper, Wistar noted, gathered at the feet of the two women of his party in drifts and mounds. And in spite of Judith's added touch of dignity her share in the boisterous tribute was no less than May's. His heart

warmed with pride. But he did not reflect that if she had proved as he hoped it might not have been so.

As Onderdonk passed along, leading the seniors, his office protected him from the rustling bombardment; but when he came opposite May, that irrepressible young lady gathered up the *débris* at her feet in armfuls, and ran along the half-emptied stand, bubbling with laughter, and launching the missiles upon the marshal's head of resolute, if unaccustomed, dignity. When she had exhausted her armory, she sank breathless upon a seat.

Judith bent over May to straighten her hat, and Penrhyn made occasion to pick the confetti out of her hair and brush it with his handkerchief from her ears. Wistar stood by and carefully collected the bits of paper as Penrhyn let them fall. With eyes dancing, cheeks crimsoned with excitement, and the sun illuminating her masses of yellow hair, May was certainly the sort of young creature that boys of all ages delight to meddle with.

When Penrhyn had ended his self-appointed task he saw what Wistar had been doing. "What's that for?" he said.

It was the first time he had found occasion to speak to Wistar, and his voice had an instinctive tone of hostility.

"She was so pretty in all this, I was hoping she'd let me put some of it back."

"I too," said Judith.

Penrhyn's manner changed, and he shrugged good-naturedly. "What you say in this section goes!" he laughed to Wistar.

Judith cast a few flakes into the golden hair, and Wistar, shoulder touching shoulder with her, placed a red star in one ear, a white star in the other. Clumsy as he was, he found it necessary to take her soft, firm chin and each pink lobe in his fingers. May shrugged prettily at his touch, like a wild-wood creature, and half raised her hand. Wistar caught it, and kissed it lightly.

"Have I been bad?" he asked of Judith, as they walked on in the wake of the departing crowds.

Her answer was to show him a handful of tangled streamers and stars. "I am saving them up for May to remember this by. It's her first Class Day, and you know she never has had her share of fun, poor baby. I hadn't an idea you understood such things."

"I haven't—for ten years," he said. Then he added equivocally, watching the faint flush come as he did so: "since I was up here last!"

He had understood. Penrhyn had not. Human hope has often clung to slenderer straws.

CHAPTER IV

IT was not until evening that Wistar found himself again alone with Judith, for Penrhyn was expert in all the minor arts of address. Even then, though he did not know it, he once more owed his fortune to the younger Miss Sears. They were wandering on the outskirts of the throng that had gathered around the Glee-Club platform in the Yard. All about them was the low, happy babble of the crowds, which blended pleasantly with the singing, sentimental and gay.

"About your father's venture—with Penrhyn," he said abruptly; "you know I've refused to join in it?"

"You don't believe in it?"

"Do you?"

She hesitated, then said quite simply: "When I found how eager Mr. Penrhyn was, I *urged* father to go in with him."

He was silent.

She looked up at him with an expression at once subtle and frank. "You may say it," she said.

The evanescent smile came into the hollows beyond the corners of his mouth.

"I find I don't have to."

"We've played the game of truth once already," she said, with quiet humor. "You would rather have me say it!"

He smiled ruefully. "Very much."

"Well, then: Mr. Penrhyn has already shown himself one of the boldest and cleverest of the younger men on Wall Street. The fact that he has taken up with father's idea is evidence that it is a good one. But that's not what you wouldn't say! It is known that he has ideas — how shall I express it? — ideas above Wall Street."

"Above Wall Street—geographically."

"You are abominably precise!" She laughed a little dubiously. "Personally, father and I both like Mr. Penrhyn."

She had told him everything—except what he most wanted to hear. How much did she "like" this man? "If I were omniscient," he said, "I couldn't have been half as explicit—or anywhere near as unfathomable."

"Don't you see?" she said, and her masterhood of the noncommittal mounted higher. "In either case it would be wrong to let him go on for any but the most practical reasons—the most unpersonal!"

Again he was silent. From the point of view of the manufacturer, combination might bring stability and increased earnings; but, as far as he could see, there was no such prospect of profit as would attract the practical financier. It was true that if a monopoly could be gained on any essential part of the raw material of the motor car, such as rubber for the tires, the opportunities for a trust would be magnificent; but he could not see that such a monopoly was possible. Until to-day he had thought of the project as one of the palpably impracticable devices of Wall Street —an exuberance of wild-cat finance on the back fence. But in view of what Judith had said— and of what she had left unsaid—Penrhyn's persistence in it took new meaning. The greatest of financiers—to the outward view mere captains of industry whose profession it is to command profit and defeat loss—have been notoriously swayed by private loves and hates, even petty rivalries and unreasoning jealousies. Wistar had no cause to think Penrhyn above the common lot. If his project succeeded Penrhyn would have restored Judith and her father to the world of luxury and distinction in which they once had been leaders. If it failed they would be ruined, and Penrhyn would have a strong hold on her through her father's necessities, which were hers. Heads I win, tails you lose was the game he was playing.

And he had asked Wistar to make himself an ally in that game.

"*You* will have to say it now," she prompted.

"Your reasoning is perfect—except in the case of a man who chose to befriend you for motives he didn't wish to own."

She reddened. "To buy my regard? Can you imagine such an insult? With a right-minded girl, can you imagine any course less likely to succeed!"

The success of such an attempt, Wistar saw, would depend upon keeping the motive dark, but already he had an uncomfortable sense of implying evil of his rival. "Of course," he said, with as much conviction as he could command, "Mr. Penrhyn believes in what he proposes."

"I *know* that he does."

The sun had not yet set, but already twilight was gathering among the dense green elm-tree tops that roofed the yard. Beneath the branches, Japanese lanterns began to float and shine, like bubbles that had risen to the surface of a caldron of seething gayety.

"And you, Mr. Wistar! Do you think the venture bad?"

"It might work out very profitably—if it weren't for us fellows who are against it."

"Then the fact that you *are* against it——?"

He explained that he had had experience of the trusts and felt very strongly against them.

She admitted the danger, but protested that, under honest management, it need not be considered. And then she outlined the advantage of consolidation, urging, and with arguments of weight, that within clearly definable limits, the control of prices, the manipulation of markets, even speculative investments—buying on margin, selling short, and all the devices of Wall Street—were elements of health and power. There was knowledge of the world and of affairs in what she said. And she spoke simply, with ever-present lightness and charm. It was a phase of her mind which he had not encountered in the old days—which had probably not existed.

He recalled the saying that no woman is worth talking to until she is thirty, or worth looking at after it. She lacked only two or three years of the mark; and yet, vitally interested as he was in what she was saying, he found himself, from time to time, forgetting it in the sheer joy of gazing into her face as she spoke. In the corner of her eyes little radiant lines appeared and vanished; beyond the corners of her mouth the soft, firm, deep-tinted cheeks crinkled when she smiled. It had always been so, he now recalled, though it was a trait which had vanished from his idealized memory of her. And the lines, far from sug-

gesting a wrinkle, were as always part and parcel of her own rare youth and charm.

She was quick to see that his attention wandered—though not the reason for this; and as quickly she broke into a lighter vein. "Do you know, with all one hears about trust-busters, you are the only one I have ever met? Are you *such* a conservative? But I had forgotten! Cave men usually are conservatives, aren't they? No doubt, when our ancestors of the early bronze age began to chop wood and build houses in the fertile valleys, cave men up on the rugged hills called them immoral, and made war on them with paleolithic clubs. But mind you, the bronze age won!"

Wistar did not answer.

"Then you really mean to fight us?"

"I'm afraid so. It was to persuade my cousin to do so that I came. What you have told me—it has made me unhappy, very! All my life the only thing I ever really cared for was to be of service to you. And there has been only one little thing I have ever been able to do—a little thing to you, though not to me."

She gave him an inquiring glance.

"So little that you don't even know what it was!"

"I should like to know."

"It was what you call neglecting you. It took courage, that, for you are the only one I have

ever had to admit as master. But now, I'm afraid, I shan't even be able to neglect you—I shall be obliged to wage warfare on you and those you hold most dear—a very hard and bitter, perhaps fatal warfare! And if this last hope of your father's comes to nothing—" He broke off, thinking of what only to-day she had said of his latest failure, and then: "Can't you dissuade him?"

"I'm afraid not. He is very obstinate. And you?"

"On that subject I'm obstinate, too!"

Wistar had spoken boldly enough; but into his heart, so long heavy and dead, there had lately crept a hope which he struggled in vain to banish. To be at an equal advantage with Penrhyn, he had only to see the new order as she had so clearly sketched it. And might she not be right? The nickname she had shot at him was a strange one; but somehow he felt it had stuck in the target. Only this morning he had dwelt on the rugged hills—out of touch with the young life about him; and it had taken half an hour with her to make him cheer like a Comanche. For ten years he had lived in an ideal of her, and she had shattered it at a blow, giving him the infinitely finer and sweeter reality. Had not his scruples against what her father proposed been as dry as his distaste for the boisterous ways of the undergraduate, as

sentimental as his notion of what she should have been? Had not his long years of labor, his self-tormenting and futile efforts to forget her, made him less than a man of the human world? He would have found it easier to convince himself if he had not been sensible of the most human desire to do so. Then came temptation. If he should go back on his principles—after all, they were only *his* principles—and, like his rival, lapse from stern rectitude in dealing with her? He reddened at the thought, and at the leap his heart gave in answer to it. But it came to him again and again.

By this time the movement of the crowd about the Glee-Club stand had carried them toward its vortex, and Wistar became suddenly aware that it was crushing Judith close to his side—so close that he felt every motion of her slow, deep breathing. Again his pulse leaped. Then it seemed to stand still. In all the long years he had never realized until that instant how vast, how untraversable, were the distances that separated her heart from his. Yet still he felt her deep, unconscious breathing.

With sudden strength, almost violence, he forced their way out of the crowd.

"Oh, dear!" she exclaimed, "I did want to hear the rest of the song. Do you know it?"

He had not heard the song.

"It went something like this:

"How well I remember the days of Sixty-one,
When the cannon balls were flying by the peck!
Along came a cannon ball, a-whizzin' through the air,
And hit Bill Jones on the neck.

Now what did happen to Bill?"

He groped for a while in the memories of his undergraduate days, and repeated:

"Then up jumped Bill; and says he: 'My neck is tough;
They're a-tryin' fer to kill me, but they can't!'
Those good old days, beneath the stars and stripes,
When we fit for General Grant!"

As they walked on in silence, she was smiling at the inconsequent gayety of the glee. But his arteries, where she had brushed against him, were running liquid fire. He fixed his eyes on the afterlight of the sunset, which shone between the ancient college buildings. It was as if the western heavens were ground full of powdered gold.

"Well?" she inquired.

"I was thinking of the dust that makes the sky so bright. You know it is dust, don't you?—dust from the roads and the dry hilltops; pollen, too, perhaps, from the fading flowers. Some time, in the many, many centuries to come, these bodies that now are you and I may meet and mingle, way up there."

She paused, considering. "It sounds delight-

ful—and, unlike most delightful things, quite proper."

"I shall regard it as an engagement! When I am beaten up from the road by hoofs and wheels, I shall rise and find up there the dust of a rose."

They walked on in silence. He was wrestling now with his matter-of-fact business problem.

When at last she spoke—long after he had forgotten what they had been saying—her voice had again a trace of acid, though a faint one. "Do you suppose your dust will find that mine has at last achieved the beauty of maturity and age?"

Toward midnight, when the gayeties of the day were over, Wistar went with his cousin to the rooms in the Yard. A new hope was dawning. The all-important decision did not rest wholly with him. Onderdonk, it seemed, had more than a passing acquaintance with the younger Miss Sears—she was the one girl he had invited to Class Day. Wistar might be stern with himself, but surely he need not seek to control his cousin's conscience. If only Billy were strongly enough on the other side . . . ? With him, however, honesty was all but an instinct. He began to urge his cause conscientiously upon his cousin, indeed with vigor and conviction.

The young man listened for a moment, and then took from his desk a post-card on the back of which was written in his own hand: "Your final mark in Economics 9b is ——" Below, in the blue pencil of the reader of examination books, was a large *B*. "That's the course in trade combinations," Billy explained. "I wrote a special report on the case against the trusts."

B, Wistar remembered, was not easy to get, even for plodding students; and he knew that Billy, immersed in the enjoyment of college life and his responsibility with the eleven, had got his degree, as the undergraduates phrase it, on his shape.

"You—a grind!" said Wistar.

"I was interested in that course. Sooner or later, I felt sure, you would be up against the proposition. So I found out all about it—read about a ton of newspapers and periodicals."

The reply, so different from what Wistar had —yes! hoped—brought him to a sudden standstill. In Billy this pride of knowledge and academic certainty of opinion was irresistibly droll. But the issue was dark enough. "You know that Mr. Penrhyn is in with Mr. Sears, and that he is a powerful man in Wall Street?"

"Still, if it is up to us, we can put him out of business?"

"I feel sure that we can. But you realize what

the fight may mean to your guest, Miss Sears—to her father?" He spoke of their poverty, of the old man's desperation, of Judith's loyal sacrifice.

Billy listened patiently. "I know all that," he said. "But do you think the right sort of a girl would want a fellow to do things for her that he thought wrong?"

Wistar could have laughed outright in satiric bitterness. He, the mature, the serious man, was learning wisdom and honor from this babe and suckling in the school of life. "You have become a moralist," he said, "as well as a scholar?"

Billy had all the undergraduate's horror of being caught in a pose. "I laugh at your jokes," he said. Then regaining courage, he added, "You haven't got cold feet yourself, have you?" He lighted a pipe, defiantly, and sat in the window seat.

"Do you insist on fighting Sears and Penrhyn to the finish—whether it is their finish or ours?"

"That's it."

"And I may go ahead at once to organize the opposition?"

"The sooner the quicker."

"Then I open up on them to-morrow."

Filling one of Billy's many briars, Wistar lighted it, and with the first puff laid a hand on

his cousin's shoulder. "You're *all* right, Bill," he said.

Out in the yard the gay lanterns one by one had flickered out. The college janitor was lifting them down from among the trees with a long pole. Overhead a full moon was shining through the soft June night.

Wistar puffed vigorously at his pipe, somber and abstracted.

"That's a corking fine moon," said Billy, "the kind of moon I hoped we'd have for Class Day. I don't think I ever saw a finer."

"The moon is according to specifications," Wistar answered, in a tone which struck the young man as unduly businesslike.

CHAPTER V

WHEN Wistar awoke, as his train was crossing the Harlem, a radical change had come over his outlook upon life. The love that had been a dream, idealized in the perspective of years, had become present and actual. Now for the first time he was a factor in Judith's happiness, a factor of vital moment. Out in the darkness, beyond the threshold of his conscious self, there was a faint new star that danced with hope. Yet his reason and his sense of the facts of life told him that a sorrow awaited him of a kind he had never before imagined.

There was one creature in the world whom he loved, and day in and day out he would be obliged to bend his energies to bring her and those she loved most dearly to ruin—a ruin in which material poverty was so much the least of evils. Whenever the thought recurred to him it filled him with an actual, sickening anguish. As his train glided in among the hideous roofs and chimneys of Manhattan, it seemed that the city was at once

the cause of his sorrow and its embodiment. Often before his heart had felt cramped in the contemplation of its sordid and truculent money-greed. Now he could have cursed it with a prophet's vindictive wrath.

At his office he had scarcely scanned the accumulation of mail when he received a call from an auditor—appointed by the projectors of the association of independents to determine and report the resources of each of the firms. If it was important to the trust to secure Wistar, to the anti-trust it was the vital consideration. Some of the association were small makers whom Penrhyn had not thought it worth while to enlist. But not a few of them had voluntarily held aloof from him; and as the auditor now made evident, powerful reënforcements were at hand. No less than five of the very firms that had hitherto been provisionally pledged to Sears and Penrhyn had agreed to join the independents on condition that Wistar also join them.

Wistar had never had any real doubt as to the outcome of the fight; but now he was manifestly master of the situation. He at once gave the auditor access to his books. The act was an habitual and almost mechanical response to his sense of duty. But in his heart he felt that he was signing the death warrant of all he held most dear. And so he took up his old life again—the

dingy, plodding, intense life which to Judith had seemed that of a cave man.

A few days later, several of the evening papers gave prominence to a rumor from Paris—the dispatches called it "persistent"—according to which the great manufacturers of the Continent, under the lead of one of them who had steadily of late increased his control over the industry, were forming a combination not dissimilar to the one Sears and Penrhyn were promoting. Two of the papers printed editorial articles which took a gloomy view of the motor industry in America. Its chief obstacle, they said, was the popularity of foreign cars. If the great European makers combined to reduce the cost of manufacture, eliminate rival advertising, commissions, and other wastes of competition, American firms would find it very much harder to make head against them. More than ever it was necessary for them to combine.

One of the papers pointed out that the new developments abroad would make the opposition to the American trust at home doubly dangerous. On the following Sunday it printed a special article about Wistar, illustrated with a portrait of his father, already marked by a senatorial beard as of a past generation, a photograph of himself as a member of the 'varsity eleven, and recent snapshots of him coming out of his garage and enter-

ing his club. The article characterized him as an academic conservative who held the future of the American automobile in his hand.

Midsummer is the time of rumors, and only a few days later came a report that an attempt was on foot to monopolize the output of crude rubber, both in Africa and South America. A trade journal with an imagination remarked that the project presented no greater difficulty than other trusts had conquered, and that if it could be brought off the command of the manufacture of tires would make the rubber monopoly the natural ally of a monopoly in motor cars.

To Wistar the idea was a palpable mare's nest. And he had as little fear of any combination of the makers of motor cars in Europe, for he knew —none better—the difficulties which, there as here, stood in the way of such a project. But he saw very clearly that the tactical effect of the rumors would be to strengthen him in the position in which fate had placed him. Beset by enemies at home and abroad, even Mr. Sears might lose faith in the feasibility of his undertaking. Wistar's impulse was to go to the old man frankly and urge reason against his rashness. But this, he saw, would only be to weaken his own position, and so tend to defeat his ends. His wiser course was to proceed with all possible boldness, counting upon the ultimate stress of circumstances to force

Sears and Penrhyn to make the advances. Yet as time wore on, they gave no sign of weakening, but instead pushed forward steadily and boldly. Wistar fell prey to increasing anxiety.

Meantime a new factor was added to the personal issue. The Searses were spending the summer in town, and Billy was living up to his philosophy of the situation by seeing not a little of them. Wistar was convinced that the young man had very much more than a passing interest in May. Before pledging the firm beyond recall, he wished to make sure that his cousin was not repenting his decision, and appointed a conference with him in the office of the garage.

July had found Billy hard at work in town, grimy-handed and clad in oil-smeared overalls. It was his own idea that he should learn the business from the bottom up; and Wistar had advised him to begin in the repair shop of the garage rather than in the factory, as a young doctor takes a hospital position to study all diseases in all sorts and conditions of men before attempting a general practice. It was not an easy step down he had had to take—from his self-imposed researches into the case against the trusts to sorting a heap of miscellaneous parts, from first marshal of a graduating class to the helper of a common machinist; but he took it all with a happy combination of dignity and sense of humor.

There was a change, however, which he did not find so easy. The garage was crowded with the cars of business men who used them nightly to recuperate from the heat and strife of the day, and the repair shop was working overtime. "Giant of the gridiron" though Billy was, according to the newspapers, twelve hours of manual labor daily gave his sinews and bones an experience they had not been trained to bear. As the hand of the clock in the machine room approached the hour of the conference, he was thinking less of the business crisis than of the chance it gave him to knock off work in the scorching, deafening loft, for half an hour in the ease of the private office.

"Mr. Wistar asked me to report to him at four," Billy said to the foreman, raising his voice to drown the shrieking of machinery.

"Tuckered?" shouted that worthy with a grin. He relished hugely the idea of being boss to one of the firm.

"Yes," said Billy, "but this is on the level."

"Ye can go," said the foreman.

As Billy passed out from the odor of gasoline, and the jurisdiction of the huge "No Smoking" signs, he took out his neglected pipe; and as he stretched his aching frame in a leather easy chair he blew out the first delicious puff. The awnings were down, and the windows closed to keep

out the hot afternoon air of midsummer. The room was dark except for an occasional shaft of sunlight that darted through the chinks about the awnings; and by contrast with the machine room, it was deliciously cool. The blue-gray clouds of smoke, as they spread along the planes of sunlight, were slabs of liquid marble, and Billy watched them with a sense of positive luxury. Wistar had not yet come, but he was far from repining.

A report like a pistol shot fell upon Billy's ear from down the block, and then another and another. He started, but lay back in his chair with a smile. An ill-adjusted motor was pounding toward him, unburned gasoline from which was blowing up at intervals in the muffler. For a moment the fusillade ceased, and then there was a nearer report like that of a cannon, followed by a feminine cry of alarm. Billy jumped to his feet, but the sudden pain in his relaxing muscles checked him. Nobody who had been really hurt, he reflected, could make a noise like that.

"Hello, my man!" some one called out, half good-naturedly and half in patronage. "Smoking in the private office? That means the boss isn't here. When'll he be in?"

"Oh, Penrhyn!" Billy answered, without, however, stirring from his chair. "Due now."

"Onderdonk!" said Penrhyn, eying the overalls. "I didn't know you for the glad rags." His manner became suddenly jovial, and he offered to shake hands; but Billy withheld his soiled palm. With a friendly air of burlesque Penrhyn took him by the sleeve and shook his arm.

There was a breeziness in the man's manner and a frankness in his big laugh to which most men responded instinctively. "Something up with that motor combination?" Billy asked.

"You want to talk about it?"

"No. Thought you did."

"We gave you a chance to come in on the ground floor. What more do you want? What I'm after is a mechanic. My bubble has bust."

Billy laughed, concealing his disappointment. "*That* your machine? One of your French scorchers? The Yellow Peril, or The Purple Assassin?"

"Neither," answered Penrhyn. "It's Irvingdale Smith's new model. Your friend Miss Sears calls it the Petted Polecat. We had just started for a little burst of speed up the Boulevard, when suddenly we stopped—with a burst of something else. Sounded like the gasoline tank."

Billy grinned. Irvingdale Smith was one of the manufacturers, a rival of Wistar's, on whose plant the promoters held an option. Proceeding on the theory that the automobile of the future

would be within the means of the man in the street, he had put a gaudy, four-cylinder affair on the market for eight hundred dollars. If he had counted on impressing Wistar, he was disappointed. Never had a car better answered to Simeon Ford's description of a Louis Quinze body with a tomato-cans engine.

"Your T. C. model?" Billy suggested.

Penrhyn caught the allusion. "Name it and you can have it," he laughed, with inexpugnable joviality. "But somehow or other, we've got to get on. I've asked Miss Sears and her father to dine at Bardine's. And Bardine, like Sheridan, is twenty miles away."

"Which Miss Sears?" Billy asked, striding toward the door, forgetful now of his stiffening muscles.

Penrhyn laid hold of the straps of his overalls. "I'll tell you," he said, "when you've put a man on the job!"

Billy bethought himself, and pressed a bell. There was a man who might serve the turn—one Andrews, an expert machinist, who had taken to drink and had been reduced to the position of man-of-all-jobs.

Penrhyn's alert and gray-green eyes took Andrews in at a glance—a pallid wastrel, whose red side whiskers and scraggy imperial only emphasized the twitching, hunted look of a degenerate

face, and whose eye was already beginning to swim with the day's potations.

"Both of the Misses Sears are out here," Penrhyn said to Billy as they went into the street.

May met Billy with a cordiality that ended in blackening her glove upon his palm before either of them was aware of it. When he blundered an apology, she laughed, and made a pretext of her soiled fingers to lend a hand now and again in the work of putting in a new muffler. She had spent much time with Billy in his car, and knew more about a motor than either of the men whose aim it was to gain control of all motors.

The garage was crowded with automobiles and mechanicians, so they had to work by the curb in the shadow of the buildings, while a knot of idlers gathered about, who divided their time between admiring the gaudy motor car and advising the motorists to get a horse.

CHAPTER VI

AS Wistar's purring motor glided up the gangway into the garage, he passed Judith and Penrhyn, standing at the door. The glare of the sun, through an atmosphere that vibrated with the heat of a long day, had reduced the asphalt to rubber; and the passers-by in the street walked as if their feet were weighted with ball and chain; but Judith looked breezy and fresh, as some women have the genius of doing, even in midsummer and in the city. The sight of her there on his own threshold awakened a new melody in his heart. And then came an afterthought more deeply stirring than the first. Was it possible that the presence of the party would lead to overtures of peace?

When he alighted this hope was dispelled.

Penrhyn was eagerly discussing the chance of getting away, and was clearly less interested in Wistar than in Andrews and the muffler. Judith, however, mingled with the more selfish consideration a sympathetic curiosity as to the machinist.

This enabled Wistar to lead up to the business issue as if by chance. Andrews, he explained, was a chronically lame duck, who had disappointed every hope of reformation. He had given him work in the factory, but had long suspected him of copying the patterns of improvements he was making and selling them to a rival manufacturer in the West, so that every time he brought out a new model this rival was in the field with one like it.

"You mean Irvingdale Smith?" Penrhyn interjected.

"I don't accuse anyone," Wistar said.

But the case was common knowledge. Smith was, in fact, the leader in the recent development of unwholesome competition—theft, price-cutting and flimsy workmanship—which constituted the most valid argument for consolidation.

Wistar went on with his story. Finally he had caught Andrews in the draughting room, too much interested in the plans of one of his inventions. Then he had put him in the garage, where there was less temptation, and the man had promptly taken to drink.

"And by the way," Wistar concluded, "Smith is getting cold feet about that combination of yours. He's in town, and making overtures to join us fellows."

"We have an option on his plant," Penrhyn ob-

served quite casually. "But if you want him you can have him."

"Not I! I've had enough of him!"

They were all silent, and again Wistar inwardly lamented the failure of his hope.

Judith broke the silence to revert to Andrews.

"A universal genius!" Wistar said. "When he's sober he's anything from a bookkeeper to a machinist. When he's drunk he goes in for safe-blowing and religion."

Penrhyn was a bit of a mimic, and as he spoke he gave a spirited parody of the warring phases of Andrews's character. "Safe-blowing!" he exclaimed, stroking his chin. "Hence the dashing red imperial! Religion! Hence the ministerial sideburns!"

"Fire and brimstone," laughed Wistar; "if you call that religion."

A satirical smile flashed across Penrhyn's face. "Isn't that religion enough for sideburns?"

"How does such a man get religion?" Judith asked, incredulous.

"He got his in Sing Sing. When he was released he went to preaching eternal damnation in Madison Square. Unfortunately, he took so much money Sundays that he was drunk most of the week. Yet he seemed to want to pull together, so I gave him a chance."

"I don't see how such a man can be sincere,"

said Judith, whose knowledge of the depths of human impulse was ill proportioned to her sympathies.

"Nowadays," Wistar suggested, "nobody is insincere—only politely cynical."

"That's it!" laughed Penrhyn, "politely cynical—to preach hell in Madison Square, and raise it in the Tenderloin!"

Judith's eyes danced into Penrhyn's with appreciative laughter; but in a moment she turned them, again sympathetic, upon Wistar. "Does he really try?" she asked.

"They are born degenerates," said Penrhyn, "and they will die degenerates. As one of them once remarked, they can resist anything—except temptation!"

Penrhyn's assurance of virtue jarred upon Wistar. "I imagine," he said, "that many of us would prove weaker than we think if we had the temptations of such men."

The brief colloquy, while it confirmed his dislike of Penrhyn, gave him his first impression of the charm he might have for such a girl as Judith. Upon her inborn refinement and inbred reserve his alert, decisive mentality, fresh animal spirits and gift of hearty laughter made an impression of almost prismatic brilliance.

The thought recalled him to the issue that lay nearest his heart. Why should he not make use

of the present occasion to speak of things as they were to Judith? As the work on the muffler dragged on, he suggested that she come in and sit down in the office. Penrhyn started to follow; but Wistar pointed out that he had better keep an eye on Andrews, and his tone had a touch of authority that made Penrhyn obey, though not without a mute demurrer.

CHAPTER VII

WISTAR seated Judith in the big chair, and, gathering the electric fans, turned them so that they wafted convergent breezes on her.

She relaxed gratefully, but protested that he should have some of the fans for himself, he looked so tired and hot.

"That is just why I'm turning them all on you. You are so fresh and cool that by and by the whole place will be swept by ocean breezes."

She nodded a gracious "Thank you."

"Besides," he added, "I'm going to tell you something that—I hope—will *not* make you more comfortable." Wistar outlined the situation briefly but forcibly. "The money your father is using is yours," he concluded. "I tell you this so that you may, if you will, bend your influence to make him reconsider this project in time."

She shook her head. "Father is as confident on his side as you are on yours."

"But not with the same reason—I think I can convince you."

"The question is whether I could convince him! Mother died, you know, when May was born, and all his lonely life since he has been wrapped up in his dreams of power. I am all he has to take her place. Don't you see? I *have* to stand by him. And this particular venture—it's his ewe lamb!"

"A ewe lamb on Wall Street? Just what will happen to you—if it is sheared?"

She shrugged her shoulders. "For myself—what do girls do when they are poor?"

"Some get work, and some get married."

"You see how easy it is! It sounds like a nursery rhyme! It's for father I'm worried. All his life—and all his fortune!—he has spent trying to show obstinate people how to make money." She broke off and looked up at him with a little grimace. "And you never will see it!"

Wistar shook his head. "There's one thing more obstinate than people—facts! Here is a fact that is likely to prove very obstinate!" He took from his pocket a package of papers—matters about which he had come to consult Billy. One set of papers, he explained, related to a new device for transmitting the power to the axles, an invention which, if successful, would be revolutionary. The gasoline motor had been brought to a truly marvelous perfection, and there was no

patent on it, anyway; but present methods of gear transmission were crude, almost incredibly crude, involving a great waste of power, trouble in shifting speeds, and a brutal strain on a delicately adjusted mechanism. A patentable device that was economical of power and easily and accurately controlled would be, in effect, a monopoly far more perfect than any trade consolidation could secure. If controlled by anyone outside the proposed trust, it would be an almost fatal obstacle to it.

He offered to explain the records of his tests of the gear.

"I'm afraid I shouldn't understand."

"Nor your father, nor Mr. Penrhyn," he said. "But before you commit yourself finally to the promotion, I beg you to send an expert to inquire into this gear of Minot's."

"Minot?" she asked with deepened interest—"Mr. Franklin Minot? He was father's first partner in promoting, more than twenty years ago." Then she added with a sad little shake of her head: "Both of them have seen so many failures since!"

Wistar looked at her with keen curiosity. "You know him? He has all the earmarks of the traditional genius. I've seen dozens like him. But he's the only one who is the real thing. Why has he failed?"

"Father is a bit of a genius too," she objected, with a *moue* of amiable protest. Then she said sadly: "Failures, I imagine, are very much alike; it is only success that brings out a man's distinction. They are both terribly set in their ways! Mr. Minot has thrown away chance after chance. He always demands practical control of his inventions, and people who have money won't listen to that."

Wistar smiled. The hard fate of inventors, of which the public hears so much, is generally the result of underestimating the value of efficient business sense, and exaggerating the value of an idea. "He still insists on it. He can't get together enough money to build and test his own model—not even to get out a patent, a hundred dollars! Before he would place the matter in my hands he made me promise to guard his secret as my own. But he asks me to form a company to back him, and then give him the control of the whole concern! Even at that, he says, I shall make more than I have a right to. Yet every few days he drops in to see if there's any chance—he seems to know by instinct when I'm here—and he looks so starved it's all I can do to keep from offering him the price of a dinner."

Minot had married a young girl, Judith related—a friend of her mother's, who had been bred to every luxury. Mrs. Sears had kept track

of them until she died, and then Judith, mere girl though she was, had taken them as a sort of legacy in charity. She had seen them go down and down, from their own world to a flat in Harlem, and then to a boarding house on the fringe of respectability. At present they were living in rooms far over on the East Side, and Mrs. Minot was taking in sewing to keep their child from actual hunger.

"And now, after all," Judith pleaded, "if they can be made rich again, brought back to health and comfort, to the life they were born to, you won't let his obstinacy keep you from helping him?"

Wistar was quick to see an advantage. He looked steadily into her troubled eyes.

"Even if his gear puts into my hands a fatal weapon against your father?"

In her interest in her old friends Judith had forgotten her own anxiety. Now, when it was recalled to her thus abruptly, her face clouded. "If his success stands in the way of father's," she asked, almost pathetically sincere, "would you think me wrong if I grudged it to him?"

Wistar's heart was no less torn than hers, and the fact brought all his tenderness to the surface. He turned away from her in an effort of self-control.

As he did so the door opened and Minot came

in. "I just happened by," he said, as he had so often said before. "And I thought I'd drop in to see if there was any news."

His grizzled hair and famished face struck on Wistar's sympathies as they had never done; and his clothes, worn to a thread, but scrupulously brushed, even pressed, spoke eloquently of the traditions of the gentleman. Again Wistar saw an advantage, and leaving Judith in her big chair by the window, went to the door and took Minot's hand. "There *is* news," he said, "and good news."

A tremor passed through Minot's wasted frame, but his eyes glowed. "You believe in it!"

"I'm ready to form a company for you. If the thing pans out as I expect, I shall want your concern to work in combination with ours here." It was not necessary to explain the trust situation, for by this time the papers were full of it.

Minot leaned against Wistar's desk, and a shadow passed across his wan face. "You're not making a fool of me!" he said, almost fiercely.

"The fellow who invented this," Wistar reassured him—"it would take a sharper man than I to make a fool of him." He put his hand on the shrunken shoulder.

Minot looked up quickly with a touch of long-accustomed suspicion. "But you won't give me what I demand—the control of the company! If

you meant to—you would be too shrewd to say all this!"

"What you ask," said Wistar, "is all against the general practice. But Mr. Onderdonk and I —when we've got a good thing, and a good man, we deal above board. And in this case we can't afford *not* to!"

Minot sank into the chair and buried his face in his hands. "It is I who am making a fool of myself! I hope you'll forgive my suspicion. The fact is, I'm not quite myself to-day. My wife is ill, and I've been so—so worried that I—forgot —to get luncheon."

Wistar understood what Minot only half expressed.

"In that case," he said, "we'll wait till to-morrow to talk particulars. But if you don't mind I'll write you a check, just to show that we mean business. By the way, you know Miss Sears, don't you?"

Minot, eager and intent, had not noticed her in the darkened room. Now he rose and went to her with a touch of old-fashioned courtesy. "Bless you, Judith!" he said. "You will be as glad as anybody to hear of our good fortune."

When he took the check from Wistar and glanced at it, he smiled, and passed his hand across his forehead. The sum ran into five figures. "I feel as if I were dreaming," he said. "For

twenty years I've dreamed of just such a time as this!" In an instant his happiness vanished. He hesitated, and then said quite frankly: "For to-night could you give me something in currency? It's too late to deposit this; and you know—I told you—my wife——"

Wistar took up the telephone from his desk and spoke to the cashier.

When Minot went out, Judith came to Wistar and laid a hand lightly upon his shoulder. "It is good of you! Think of them—all of them—health, happiness, after a living death of twenty years!"

Pity is said to be a very poor relation of love; but the emotion of that moment and the affectionate touch of her hand stirred a passion before which Wistar trembled. He took the hand from his shoulder. "You mustn't be that way with me! I can't stand it!" But he held the soft, firm fingers until she withdrew them.

On his way out of the garage Minot stopped in again at the office. "You remember, it isn't patented?" he said. "You are sure no one has been able to take the idea and get in ahead of us?"

"Quite sure," said Wistar. "But I advise you to get out your papers at once."

"No danger now!" Minot laughed. Already he seemed to have grown young and strong.

When he had gone Judith sank back in her chair. "If there must be sorrow," she said, "how merciful to have done with it—before you are old!"

The words recalled Wistar to the affair that concerned them more nearly. But there was no time for sympathy now. He took another paper from the package—a list of the manufacturers who were pledged to stand with him, with the auditor's statement of the resources of each and the total sales of the previous year. The coalition represented a capital of over forty millions, and an annual sale of almost fifteen thousand cars. "I doubt if your people can show greater strength," Wistar said. "There is every chance that we shall stand against you. If we do—you realize what it will mean!"

"What *will* it mean?" Judith asked, half dismayed and half defiant.

"That we shall have to bring you in your youth, and your father in his age, to what Minot has suffered these twenty years! You know what that will cost us—Minot and Billy and me."

"You would do that?" she asked. Close beneath her ease and gayety, which was that of the world she was born to—beneath even her superficial friendliness for Wistar—there lay always an instinctive antagonism, a primordial resentment against this man. Now it rose to the sur-

face in an accent almost of scorn. "You *could* do that!" she exclaimed.

Wistar hesitated a moment. "I can," he said, "if I must!"

Judith laughed, but not with her natural gayety. "You have the conservatism of the cave man," she said, "and also the cave man's club!"

She rose as she spoke, and together they set out to rejoin her party; but on the gangway they were met by Penrhyn and Mr. Sears.

CHAPTER VIII

IF Penrhyn had felt Wistar's gentle snubbing, there was no trace of it in his manner. "Sorry to intrude," he said; "but your man Andrews has discharged us for inefficiency. Says what we don't know about automobiles would float a trust on Wall Street. Rather shrewd, that! We mean it shall."

"It is, in fact, about business that we want to speak to you," said Mr. Sears. "Now, when we are on the verge of harsh and destructive measures, chance has thrown us together. May we not use the opportunity for an informal talk?"

The words lifted a weight from Wistar's heart. Here, at last, was the evidence he had been waiting for that his enemies were weakening. He led them back into the office.

His instinct was for the jugular vein. Penrhyn represented the money power of the promoters, and he turned to him with resolution.

But the young man spoke before him. "When you refused to come in with us," he said, with an air of friendliness which his words belied, "you

said—I remember the phrase exactly—that you were 'determined to remain your own master.' Master of what, may I ask? We offer you power which is literally beyond the imagination to conceive. The wealth of Monte Cristo! The other day I reckoned it up. I myself, and a score of others, have more money. Among the great men of Wall Street—and you might, if you chose, become one of them—Monte Cristo would not be one-two-six."

Judith may have felt that Penrhyn's appeal was not likely to impress Wistar. "Poor Monte Cristo!" she said. "Think of him. A sort of Three-Card Monte!"

"Just about that! In this age the supreme power is industrial. Make our concern what it should be, and the men who control it will be factors in world politics!"

Wistar knew that Penrhyn was a rising power in the Street, but he had had no idea that his fortune was so much above the common lot. He was less impressed, however, than he would have been if his own resources were not also vastly beyond the general estimate of them. Far from being disconcerted, he fell into Judith's vein. "I can already see you," he said, "shooting hand-raised pheasant at Sandringham with the good King Edward, and dining imperially on the proud ship *Hohenzollern*."

The young financier turned upon him with a quick touch of rancor. "What are your ambitions?"

"Very humble, I'm afraid—to be independent, and to make good machines. I am a manufacturer."

"But the combination could make more machines," Penrhyn shot back at him, "and sell them at a lower price! What would you be then? No longer James Wistar, leader of a great industry, but one of the unfit who has fallen in the strife of progress! Whether we wished it or not, in the end we should have to make a meal of you!"

"Then the question reduces itself to this," Wistar answered very quietly, "which dog shall eat dog."

"The only way to find out is to try."

"There is, I hope, another way." Wistar took up from his desk the papers relating to Minot's gear and briefly explained the device.

Penrhyn became suddenly interested. "How do you know it will work?"

Wistar turned to the records of his own tests in the factory, explaining that they were far beyond anything he had dreamed of as possible.

Penrhyn reached for the papers and began to glance through them.

Wistar took them from him quietly but firmly.

"I have given my word," he said, "that these

shall not pass my hand. If there is anything you want to know I will tell you."

"Not patented?" Penrhyn inquired. "Is the idea patentable?"

Wistar did not answer.

"I thought you meant me to see it," Penrhyn protested. "I only want to know if it will work."

"I have gone into it—gone in rather deeply! The time is coming, and coming soon, when no car will be a first-class car without the Minot gear. And we control it! You realize, I hope, that if it came to a fight between us, a thing like that would turn the scales."

"Oh, I see!" laughed Penrhyn. "Just a little bluff to scare us off, eh?"

"Stanley!" Judith cried. "Believe me—I know! Mr. Wistar is only telling us the truth!"

"I have a special reason for not wanting to fight you," Wistar said.

"There are many good reasons," Penrhyn answered.

Wistar flushed, and his voice rose. "The best!" he said. "But not fear!" In a moment he controlled himself. "They are private reasons. You underestimate the fight you are running into! Why not arbitrate the matter—let the facts arbitrate for us?"

Alluding to their recent conversation about Irvingdale Smith, he explained that a number of

prominent firms were shifting allegiance to the anti-syndicate. He took up the list of allies from the desk. "The matter has been placed in my hands, and nothing would please us all more than to adjust it without conflict. I will show you this list if you will show us similarly attested data. If it appears that you have the upper hand, we will give in. If it appears that we have, you will know better than to fight us. And I know that we have the upper hand."

He turned away as he spoke, and saw Andrews standing by the door, as if waiting to speak.

"If I am to put in that muffler," said Andrews, "I need a helper. Mr. Onderdonk and the lady got tired."

Wistar nodded, and the man went out, somewhat reluctantly, as it seemed.

When Wistar turned again to Sears and Penrhyn he saw that they had been in hasty argument. To his surprise, Penrhyn had the attitude of persuasion.

"I await your answer," said Wistar.

"My dear sir," Sears protested. "There are cases in which, in spite of the best intentions, arbitration is not possible. No man can judge between us—on paper! Even if your side appeared stronger, believing in our cause as we do, we should fight for it—though that you would appear stronger I don't for a moment believe."

"Why not put it to the test, then?"

"Because what we want is not your unwilling acquiescence, but your positive and practical aid. We know that you need us, but we are equally certain that we need you—your experience, your skill, the excellence of your car, your known integrity."

"But since I refuse that, the issue is between your strength and mine."

"What I mean," said Sears, again expanding in imagination, "is that this idea of ours, the idea of industrial consolidation, is bigger than you or I—bigger than all of us together. Our strength lies not in power of the kind you speak of, but in the fact that we are fighting on the side of progress."

"You refuse my proposition?"

Penrhyn showed hesitation, and Wistar drew a moment's hope from the fact; but Sears was resolute. "We do," he said decisively. Penrhyn nodded acquiescence.

The conference of which Wistar had hoped so much was over. "You have made the fight," he said grimly. "But I promise you I will make the fighting."

"Don't dismiss the matter so," Mr. Sears pleaded.

"How else can we dismiss it?"

"There is so much to say! It's too late for our ride now. Can't you dine with us?"

"My dear sir," Wistar protested, "the result could only be what it always has been!"

"At least you might come," urged Judith. "Perhaps, after all, if we eat enough of one another's dinners, we shan't want to eat one another."

Wistar went to his desk, where she was sitting. "If you wish it," he said.

"Ring for a messenger!" she commanded. "And may I have paper and an envelope?"

Wistar seldom used this desk, his main office being in the factory, and it was kept in scrupulous order. "My stenographer puts everything under lock and key—to save Andrews from temptation, he says." Unlocking a drawer he gave her the stationery, and having pulled the messenger call, collected the papers he had been showing and put them in the safe.

"*What* do you think can have become of May?" Judith suddenly cried. She asked Penrhyn to stay and give her note to the messenger, and then, "Come!" she said to Wistar, as she started forth, "Help me find her!"

CHAPTER IX

WISTAR had no sooner gone than a change came over Penrhyn's manner. "You put up a strong bluff," he said to Mr. Sears, "but I'm afraid you overdid it!"

"I said what I believed," the old gentleman answered with dignity. "The logic of events requires him to join us. In the end he will have to recognize it."

"He join us? Not he! Didn't you see? He's fairly eaten up with confidence and conceit. As matters stand, we've simply *got* to know how strong he is—and if you'd given the least hint of weakening he'd have shown us!"

"I think you've misread his character. He talks big; but you know the old saying—'barking dogs don't bite.'"

"That saying has been revised. You know that barking dogs don't bite, and I know that barking dogs don't bite; but that dog Wistar, does he know that barking dogs don't bite?"

Sears was clearly pained by Penrhyn's failing

courage, but still far from disheartened. "At the worst," he said firmly, "if he fights us—and I still think he won't fight—in the long run we can stand him off."

"Think? The long run? Thinking and the long run have no charm for the underwriter! To back this scheme as it stands I should have to stake my heart's blood. I've simply got to know how much of a fight he can put up. And that list would have told us."

"Surely, you exaggerate! We shall have to go in heavily, no doubt; but what is that compared with—I use your own words—the wealth of Monte Cristo!"

Penrhyn laughed outright. "*I*—the wealth of Monte Cristo! You are as innocent as our friend Wistar. That was the merest bluff! *I* not feel the loss of a few millions! You're right! I shouldn't feel it. I should be dead."

"You descend to such tricks?"

"I don't know what you call tricks. This game we're playing is not bridge. It is business. We've got to face things as they are. How do you suppose I happened to get this last chance at Wistar? That explosion of mine an accident? My dear sir, I planned the whole thing."

"That, I suppose," said Mr. Sears, smiling without humor, "is one of your jokes."

"Not *my* joke! I learned the trick from a man

who uses it to bash farm dogs as they run barking beneath the back wheels. He warned me that if I put enough gas into the muffler it would blow out the head. So I did; and I calculated so neatly that the shebang went off on Wistar's front stoop!"

"I am surprised," said Sears.

"Do you think I want to get up a syndicate to buy a Kilkenny catfight, and at the finish have the end of one tail for our money? What I want to buy is a trust. Do you realize what he says—and the beggar seemed to be telling the truth—that our own people are going back on us? One glance at that list would have shown whether we stand to pick up a few cold millions or drop them." He turned, as he finished, with a little gesture of disgust, and his eye fell upon Andrews, again standing at the door, mute and watchful. In the heat of his disappointment he had not heard the door open—or had it been opened stealthily? "Hello!" he snapped. "Where did you come from!"

"The muffler is in," said Andrews; then he added, with a look of cunning: "Couldn't help overhearing, Mr. Penrhyn."

"The devil you couldn't!"

"You want to know just who his pals are. I keep my eyes open. Perhaps I could put you wise, you and Mr. Sears."

"You are both watchful and generous. But we can do our own guessing easier."

"We can't listen to this sort of thing," Sears exclaimed. "If the motor is mended we must find May and Judith." As he spoke he went out past Andrews.

Penrhyn started to follow, but paused, remembering Judith's letter, which he held in his hand.

"'Tain't guessing I refer to," whispered Andrews. "Where is the list old Wistar spoke of?"

"Where do you suppose?" Penrhyn was a student of human nature, he told himself, and here was an interesting specimen to amuse him while he waited. "Locked up in the safe, of course."

"That little bit of antique furniture! Johnny-on-the-Spot could get into it in five minutes!"

"You want me to take up with safe-cracking, you jail bird!" The angry light in Penrhyn's eyes subsided, however, almost as quickly as it had come.

"Hold on, now!" Andrews retorted, his face clouding. "Them ain't the words! All you got to do is to put up a round thousand, and charge it to promotion expenses. Many's the gentleman done that before."

He came closer, and Penrhyn started aside to avoid his whisky breath.

As he did so the door opened, and Irvingdale

Smith came in—a cheery-eyed, black-mustached personality, who had the virtue of appearing the unrepentant pirate that he was. The three looked at one another with about equal surprise and suspicion.

"How are you?" said Penrhyn nonchalantly. "My muffler-head just blew out, there in the street, and Wistar has been kind enough to lend me a man to put it in." His tone implied that it would not be as easy for Smith to explain his presence in this particular place.

Smith was not, however, put out. "Is Mr. Wistar in?" he asked of Andrews. "I came to see him on business."

"He's been and gone," Andrews answered without hesitation. His voice clearly intimated that Smith had better go too.

"Very well," said Smith, "I'll call again." And nodding to Penrhyn he went out.

"He came to see you!" Penrhyn said, confronting Andrews. "More crooked business?"

"See me—here? Not on your life!"

Penrhyn saw the force of this.

"What he's after," Andrews went on, giving voice to Penrhyn's own conclusion, "is to get himself with the rest of your backsliders on that there list! When do you want it?"

"Not at all!" said Penrhyn. But his tone was not remarkable for conviction. At this further

evidence that his allies were coolly deserting him, he stood a while in silence.

"Not at all?" Andrews echoed significantly. "Suppose I was to go and tell old man Wistar what I just overhearn—that you've got cold feet: so cold they're frozen? *Sure* you don't want that list?"

"I don't," Penrhyn corrected himself, "unless you can give it to me to-night."

"To-night? How early?"

"Before seven-thirty, in my rooms."

Andrews's face fell. "That means crack the safe after Wistar goes, and before the garage closes!" His hand trembled and a look of fear came into his eyes. "It's State's prison, and worse than the last bit. I can't do it!"

"All right," said Penrhyn, in a tone of relief. The project was all in the way of business, and very important business, but habit and fear both struggled against this new temptation. He added, however: "—since you've dropped your nerve."

"I could do it for two thousand. It's a matter of millions to you, Monte Cristo."

At this sally, Penrhyn laughed with hearty appreciation, and in a moment his scruples lifted. The peculiarities of certain phases of American business are closely allied to the national sense of humor.

Andrews felt something of this and it gave him confidence. "Just what is it you want, and how shall I pick it out when I get inside?"

Penrhyn briefly described the paper. "And hold on!" he added. "While you're about it, if I give you two thousand, I want the patterns and records of a new gear-shifting device; that's right in your line, isn't it?"

"You mean to crib the invention? Ain't it patented?"

"Sure," said Penrhyn; "but I want to see it."

Every attraction has its corresponding repulsion and the forces that made these two men allies made them also mutually suspicious.

"If you find anything else in the safe that's in your line," Penrhyn added, "take it, for all of me."

"Say, you're a slick one!" Andrews exclaimed. "What you want is to throw Wistar off your track and make the circumstantial evidence point at me! But I know a thing or two—when I can remember both of them! Write me down on paper just what it is you want."

"Why so?" said Penrhyn significantly. "Can't you remember—both of them?"

"I shall have other things on my mind! When you're working on the keen jump, with State's prison round the corner, every second counts. There's heaps o' papers in that safe, and all on

'em got names. S'pose I get confused? You write down what you want, and I'll get it."

Penrhyn eyed him with suspicion. Yet he knew that drink, although it steadies the nerves, is apt to let slip the more delicate cogs of the memory. The stipulation, he concluded, was not unreasonable. There was no paper on the desk, and he searched his pockets in vain. His eyes fell on Judith's hand bag, which she had left on the blotting pad. The only paper in it was a pack of calling cards, Judith's and her father's.

"One of them cards will do," Andrews suggested.

"Isn't there any scrap of paper? The margin of a newspaper?"

"Come to think of it," said Andrews, his look of cunning deepening, "I'd rather have the card. Much more official like."

"Blackmail? You couldn't convict us on that, even if we refused to give up."

"But I'd make a hell of a lot of talk! After seeing the papers, suppose you said I'd made a mistake?—refused me the money? Where'd I be then? If you put it in black and white on this card, you wouldn't dare do me dirt. That's all I'm after!" Andrews selected one of Mr. Sears's cards and gave it to Penrhyn, with a pen dipped in ink. "No ticket, no soup! See?"

"My dear sir," Penrhyn said, with a smile of

frank admiration, "in slickness I yield you the bun! With that evidence, you could hold me up for the loveliest blackmail! Write it yourself!" He took up the card, and with a few sharp strokes of the pen scratched out the name and address. Then he dictated, and after a moment's reluctance Andrews wrote. "Remember," Penrhyn concluded, "before seven-thirty, by messenger! Until then, cut out the drink! If you forget my address, look in the telephone book. Call yourself at midnight and I'll give you the swag. Now it's up to us to separate." He handed him Judith's letter. "Wait for the boy outside," he commanded.

"Hadn't you best take the lady her bag?" Andrews suggested.

Penrhyn picked it up, and then put it down again. "That," he said, "is a matter that had best be left to right itself."

As Andrews stood in the garage entrance waiting for Judith's messenger, a slow smile spread upon his face. "You're pretty slick, Penrhyn," he said to himself. "But not quite slick enough! It's a business a gentleman ain't got no right to mix up with. Two thousand down, and then—if the cat jumps my way—the loveliest blackmail!"

CHAPTER X

IT was a strange sensation that Wistar had as Judith walked with him through the garage. Here she had walked a thousand times before, a memory and a dream, yet scarcely less real to his consciousness. It was to forget her, or at least to subdue the thought of her, that he had labored as he had, day and night, workdays and holidays; but his one inspiration had been this fiction of his own mind, that she knew of his sober ambitions and shared them. And now, as she walked beside him in the flesh, with the dusk of summer in her fresh cheeks and its breezes in her abundant hair, she was alien to all her memory had inspired, as it was alien to her. He felt as if in a waking dream, in which truth struggles with the vision for mastery.

"You say we are wrong," she said. "But father—smile at him as we must, what he says has the ring of truth. *I* believe he is right!"

He fixed her with his look. "You believe he is right, but I know! It is my business to know!

And from to-day the question must be not of right, but of might!"

She met his glance resolutely. "Let it be a question of might. Your business! In your life of the cave man, you have slipped behind the march of progress in the great world outside. All about us it is plain to those who will see that the future of industry is in consolidation. Against the great course of progress you are powerless."

He smiled sadly. "Theoretically—perhaps! Practically—here and now—I am master. You have it in your power to save him from worse than ruin. Whatever it costs, in order to be true to yourself, and to him, you *must* save him!"

Now as always, his dominance roused her antagonism. "Must!" she exclaimed. "By what compulsion? What right have you to command me?"

"Because I love you."

"Love! *You,* who would sacrifice us all!"

At the onset of a nature as positive as his own, Wistar's courage expanded. Ten years ago the issue between them had been personal, and he had gone down to a speedy defeat. Now, he felt, they were two pawns in the vaster game of fate, an inevitable conflict, of which the end was in other hands than theirs. "Because I love you," he said, "would you have me do wrong?"

"For a mere opinion, would you ruin—everything? It is grotesque, inconceivable!"

"If only I might do as you wish! It is my fate to fight against you. And to do that, I am giving up the one right in life that I prize!"

"What right?" she demanded.

"The right to serve you. If I could be to you what Penrhyn is, if I could do for you what he offers—" He broke off to check his passion. "I might not win you," he concluded, "but *he* would not!"

"And why?"

"Because I am the better man!"

"On that subject also," she said, "you are the authority." But it was easier to be satirical of his pride than to ignore his earnestness and conviction. As they walked on, searching the garage from floor to floor, it was she who broke the silence. "Where *do* you suppose May is? You don't imagine she can have gone out to walk with Billy in his overalls?"

He shook his head.

"Is there any place," she suggested, her eyes smiling, "where they could be alone?"

He caught her meaning. "The paint room! The paint room, ho!" And he led her to it.

Before they entered Judith knocked with an elaborate little flourish of her fist, at which they both laughed. After a brief pause, Wistar opened the door.

Billy and May were in a far, dark corner, be-

side a limousine, the door of which was left open. Guilt was in the conscious attitudes of both. "I was showing Miss Sears the patent sprinkler," Billy said with the excuse of self-accusation.

May turned her back.

"The patent sprinkler?" asked Judith. "What is that?" At the sight of May's back, she put her hand upon her lips. One shoulder of the waist bore the imprint of four grimy fingers.

"It's a fire extinguisher the insurance company made us put in here on account of the turpentine and varnish," Billy explained elaborately, pointing upward. The ceiling was studded with perforated disks of metal like the nozzle of a garden hose. "The least little rise in the temperature, and the whole place is doused."

By this time Sears and Penrhyn had joined them. "It is not," said Penrhyn, "what I call a successful invention."

"Have you tried it?" Billy asked.

"The least little rise of temperature?" Penrhyn asked. "Then how have you two escaped a ducking?"

Billy saw his handiwork. "Get out!" he said in a fierce aside to Wistar. "Shut up, can't you?" Then he delivered a kick on his cousin's heels.

"Cheer up, man," said Wistar; "what are you kicking about? You're engaged!"

Billy's face lighted with sudden inspiration. "Yes, of course," he said. "We're engaged!"

May threw herself into Judith's arms for a brief moment, and then started back with flaming cheeks. "Now *what* are you all laughing at?" she cried. "Of course we're engaged!" The righteousness of her anger quelled them all. But, like another lady, she protested too much. "In order to be engaged it isn't necessary, is it, to say a whole lot of things?"

"I was just going to say it," Billy explained, confused with anger, "when Wistar came in and—" His rage and embarrassment choked him. He went protectingly to May.

"And checked the flow of the automatic fire extinguisher," Penrhyn concluded.

"Stanley!" Judith cried, as vehemently as she could for laughing. "You are intolerable!" She reached out her arms about the two unfortunates, and gathered them in one vast embrace of sisterly tenderness, while the others stood by, a little ashamed, perhaps, of their laughter.

Presently Judith turned to her father. "Have you a hanky, Daddy? I've left mine somewhere in my bag." Her cheeks were streaming with happy tears.

"Shall I get the bag?" asked Penrhyn. "Did you leave it out in the car?"

"There, or in the office," said Judith, between sobs and smiles of tenderness.

Penrhyn vanished.

When he returned the others were in the mood of reverent sympathy. But he was in high spirits. "The car is mended!" he cried. To Judith he added: "Are you fond of walking?"

"Yes, and what then?"

"Then perhaps you will let me take you home in that automobile."

CHAPTER XI

WHEN the messenger had come and gone, Andrews felt a subtle but powerful influence steal through his fibers. His nerves responded to the call of perilous adventure with the ecstasy of the dipsomaniac at the first gulp of spirits, or of the tortured opium fiend again inhaling the pipe. He stood more erect, and the twitching muscles of his face became quiet. The calm of a great exaltation rested on his body, and his mind worked with redoubled acuteness and precision. He strode up the gangway with elastic tread, laughing inwardly to think that with one stroke more he would be free of daily labor, for to him that afternoon's work meant riches and ease—*otium cum dig.,* as he phrased it.

When Penrhyn's car glided away from the curb, Billy hurried to the wash room. It was already past six o'clock, and Andrews knocked off work too, taking pains to leave the garage at the same time as Billy, and giving him a distant and courteous good night. He was clever at establish-

ing an alibi. When he reached his lodgings by the river, he rejoiced to meet his landlady, who was, in her own descriptive phrase, rushing the growler, as she did nightly at this her supper hour. One more link in the alibi, Andrews observed with inward satisfaction.

On entering his room, the first object to catch his eye was a large Bible on the bureau. He paused at sight of it, and then with an angry impulse, threw it upon the floor and kicked it beneath the bottom drawer. Opening the drawer, he took from among his winter underclothes the few tools of the modern cracksman. Then he reached above the door and took down a flat key —the key of Wistar's office.

When he reached the sidewalk, he waited until the landlady returned with her foaming pitcher of beer.

"Afther supper," he said with his most ingratiating brogue, "I'll give mesilf the plisure of smoking a pipe wid ye, Mrs. Madigan, if ye don't moind."

"Come and smoke two," she said.

Now came the more ticklish business. He went to the saloon and calling for a stiff drink of whisky managed to engage the busy barkeeper in conversation. He made a humorous pretense that he was falling off the water wagon, and referred to a not unfamiliar story from the old country,

of the Irishman in a similar plight whom the priest had threatened, if he ever drank again, that he would turn him into a rat. "When ye see me little ears crop out, and me tail begin to sprout," pleaded Andrews with mock terror, "for the love of Mike, man, kill the cat!" The barkeeper laughed heartily—it was his business to. Then Andrews went to the plentifully stocked free-lunch counter, and after mingling for a moment with the familiar crowd about it, slunk out by the side entrance, unnoticed.

He hastily made his way back to the garage through the most crowded streets, peering into the shop windows as he passed, so as to avert his face. Everything depended on his approaching and entering the garage unseen. The hour was in his favor, being that at which most of the hands were at supper. He let himself into the office unobserved.

Shades and awnings were down, and the twilight without penetrated feebly. But he had no need of light. He replaced certain bulbs on the electric fixture with plugs attached to two sets of wires. The end of one of these sets he connected with the lock of the safe. On the end of the other was a carbon style with a wooden handle. When he touched the style to the safe, it became incandescent, like the carbon of an arc light, rapidly heating the metal. A common crockery plate,

through a hole in the center of which the style was thrust, protected his hand from the heat of the molten iron, and a pair of black goggles shaded his eyes from the glare.

Once, as he worked, he heard the steps of some one walking up the gangway outside, and his hand trembled, rattling the plate on its style. Again, there was the sound of a motor, turning into the garage at high speed. His stomach seemed to fall within him, and for a moment he felt sick. But there was no time to investigate every stirring of a mouse. Such turns were the incidents of his vocation.

Presently, the metal surrounding the style was white-hot and plastic; and though it was an inch thick and more, he bored a hole through without difficulty. With dexterous speed and precision he made a semicircle of such punctures about the lock, the whole region of metal becoming malleable. The door of the safe swung open.

The nervous tension under which he had worked now mounted to a sense of triumph. There was a messenger office on his way home; and he calculated that, in ten minutes more, he would be smoking with Mrs. Madigan. Between then and the hour of calling on Penrhyn to claim his reward, he reflected, there would be time to blow himself to a restaurant dinner. He took the card out of his pocket, and prepared to read it

by the light of an electric pocket lamp. But he stopped short, for at that moment he heard the office door open.

A scattering chill spread down his spine, but his nerves, weak to apprehension, responded firmly to the call of active danger. He grasped his revolver and glanced fiercely toward the entrance. There were more sounds, as of some one coming in; but to his amazement he could see nothing. To all intents and purposes, he was blindfolded. He tore the black spectacles from his eyes. Still he was in darkness. With an access of terror, he realized that his vision had not yet recovered from the dazzling glare in which he had been working. His one thought was to cry "Hands up!" but his voice was choked by the primeval terror of midnight. With a sudden click, a light in the electrolier flared out, and then, though dazzled, he saw the white front of an evening shirt. Wistar was standing by the door.

"Oh, Andrews!" Wistar said quietly, in a matter-of-fact tone. "Is there anything I can do for you?"

Was it possible Wistar did not suspect? For a moment Andrews debated the chances of escape.

But the moment was too much. With a sudden leap, Wistar was upon him, gripping his revolver hand and swinging him about face. In another instant his two arms were pinioned be-

hind, the revolver was wrenched from one fist and the card forced from the other. Then he was released. Turning, he found that Wistar was scanning the card.

"'(1) Gear-shifting devices,'" Wistar coolly read. "'Drawings, descriptions and records of tests. (2) Automobile makers—list of figures!' To whom are these things of interest?" He was still quite calm, but there was a sterner ring in his voice.

Andrews was silent.

"To our guests of this afternoon? I noticed you were interested in our conversation. That, you know, was why I came back."

"I done it for myself," said Andrews.

Wistar went to the safe and took out the two papers.

"This, perhaps," he said, indicating the package of Minot's designs. "But not this!" he added, showing the list of his allies. "One of our guests bribed you? Which one?"

Andrews was mute.

"It was Penrhyn!"

Still the man made no answer.

"You forget?" Wistar observed. "No matter." Then he pressed a bell.

As he did so, Andrews's resolution gave way in a fit of hysterical tears. "Don't call the copper!" he implored. "I didn't steal nothing!

You still got it all! But they would give me twenty years all the same. Think of it, sir—you who have always known liberty and ease! Twenty years of livin' death! I'd be sixty when I got out, if I lived—an old man out of work! Only don't call the cop, and I will tell you anything!"

Wistar reflected a moment. "If you said it was Mr. Sears," he said, "I should know you lied."

Andrews threw himself upon the desk and sobbed hysterically.

"Quit that!" Wistar thundered. "I promise —I won't jug you!"

The suddenness with which Andrews recovered his self-possession was instructive.

"I know who wants this," Wistar deliberated, with quiet irony. "As for the invention, I'm sorry to say I can't give it to them. It's not mine. And in the list here there are some matters that are confidential." He opened his pocketknife and cut the five names of the deserting allies of the trust. "But the rest you are at liberty to send."

All Wistar's efforts at persuasion, all his threats, had gone wrong; but chance had now put it in his power to give his enemies the most absolute and convincing evidence of the fight he stood ready to make. He unlocked a drawer in the

desk and took out an envelope. "Here! Write the address on this."

"What address?" asked Andrews.

"Can't you remember yet?" Wistar remarked with dry unconcern.

A workman entered, and Wistar bade him ring for a messenger.

Then he turned to Andrews. "Remember your promise! It's not too late yet to jug you. Besides, if you don't send it, you lose all they have promised you. Nothing worse could happen, even if I read what you write. And I give you my word of honor I won't read it."

Andrews looked at him, questioning, incredulous.

"You don't understand why I do this?" Wistar pursued, half in satire, half in earnest. "I don't want to do you out of the swag! I am very much afraid you'll need it. I've given you your last chance. I ought to have known long ago that there's no use trying to help you."

Andrews addressed the envelope and, turning the writing down, began to fold the paper.

"By the way," Wistar interrupted, "you had better let me add a word or two!" He took the paper and wrote: "Minot's drawings would be of no use to you. The invention is to be patented at once and a strong company formed to exploit it. The names of your deserting allies you will

3853634

know very soon, if you fight us, and very well." Then he returned the paper to Andrews, who inclosed it and addressed the envelope.

"Dimmick," Wistar said to the workman, "Andrews is discharged. He's a bad lot, as you see, and I'm done with him."

Andrews was breathing more freely now. "I *am* a bad lot, you're right," he said. "You've been good to me. But it's no use. Give me some real brainy work, and I'm Johnny-on-the-Spot. But day-labor—it bores me. I can stand anything better than *ong-we*."

When the messenger entered, Wistar prepaid the charge. Andrews gave him the letter and started to follow him out.

"One moment," said Wistar; "you have quite forgotten who bribed you?"

"I didn't say nobody bribed me."

"It was Mr. Penrhyn!"

"No, sir," Andrews answered with all the appearance of truth. "I give you *my* word of honor it wasn't him." Then he went out with Dimmick.

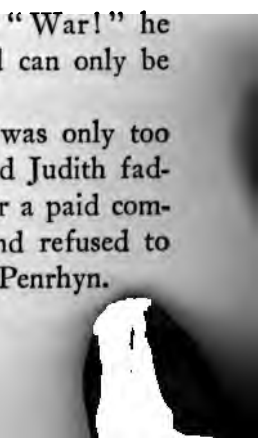
When Wistar was alone he looked at the marks of the pen on the card where the name and address had been. The "Mr." was legible, and the tops of the capitals still indicated the beginning of given name and surname. With this data, it was the work of a moment to calculate that the

given name was too long for "Stanley" and the surname too short for "Penrhyn." He tried "Livingston Sears," and it seemed to fit. Again and again he made the calculation with the same result. "Bribe giver? Thief!" He said the words to himself, after the manner of lonesome men. "It isn't possible! Her father!"

He sat a long time in silence, and the more he thought the more his suspicion preyed upon him. Slowly his anger rose, and with it his convictions. His instinct had been right from the first. With such men he could make no alliance.

Presently he remembered that he had promised to dine with Mr. Sears. If his suspicions were just, that was not possible. Yet he was too right-minded and too fair to assume the guilt of any man until it was proved, and least of all of Judith's father. He resolved to go to Sears at once, and lay the whole matter frankly before him. But he had no hopes of the outcome. "War!" he said. "Whatever the cost, the end can only be war!"

What the cost would be Wistar was only too painfully aware. At best he pictured Judith fading into middle life as a governess or a paid companion. At the worst—but his mind refused to picture what her life would be with Penrhyn.



CHAPTER XII

ON leaving the garage Judith asked her father to take the front seat with Penrhyn, and prepared to sit behind with May.

"But you are riding with *me*!" Penrhyn protested, drawing her aside.

"Surely you understand!" she expostulated. "Think of poor May—what a drop from the paint room, if she has nobody even to hold her hand!"

Penrhyn's answer was to make a face, at which Judith laughed good-naturedly, stepping into the tonneau. Then he took his place at the wheel beside Mr. Sears, and set out to make the circuit of the Park before starting home.

"Oh, Judy!" May whispered. "If you could only do it too! It's *such* fun!"

"A matchmaker already!" Judith laughed. "Who shall it be?"

"You know who! He's so tall and straight. And his eyes—if he looked at me only once as he looks at you always, he could spread me on his toast for breakfast, I'd be that melted!"

"Horrors! That too, already? You are insatiable!"

"Hold on, there," Penrhyn cried, looking around at Judith with a grimace. "That's not playing the game!"

May made a face in response which he did not see, and it was perhaps as well.

Penrhyn had scarcely turned his back on them again when a vigorous knock developed in the motor.

May leaned forward and warned him of this, as she had done, in fact, once before that afternoon. Since Billy had been home from college, she had developed the ear of an expert. "If you don't retard the spark," she said, "you'll blow us up all over again!"

Penrhyn answered that the trouble was with the carburetor, which was running too thin a mixture. His explanation was cut short by a report in the muffler. He brought the car to a stand in front of another of the many garages of upper Broadway; and, saying that it needed a thorough overhauling, asked Mr. Sears to take May home on a trolley—the telltale imprint on the girl's shoulder was hidden beneath her automobile cloak.

Judith was too good a sportsman to leave Penrhyn to go home alone, a fact which had no doubt entered into his calculation.

As the trolley bowled away from them, he professed to have thought of something, and, making a few passes beneath the bonnet, he mounted and tried the car. It went as well as ever—though that is not saying much. And so it happened that they two alone bumbled into the Park and made the circuit toward the Fifth Avenue gate. Judith was too independent and too sure of herself to pay much heed to matters of form; and, as Penrhyn urged, the one great joy of midsummer in Manhattan was that conventionalities relax.

The most resolute maiden can never be quite insensible to the idea of marriage, and Judith was far from this. That she had remained single was as little the result of preference as it was of any lack of opportunity. Her skirts had scarcely come down to her boottops when grown men began to fall at her feet; and there had never been a time when fuzzy-faced boys had not lavished on her the ecstasies of juvenile adoration. The atmosphere of devotion, which is usually the rarest, as it is the most powerful and the finest experience of a woman's life, had become a habit, and a bad habit—as she clearly saw in its penalty. For she was scarcely out of her teens when the insistent wooing of the elementary male struck across her broadest sense of humor, reminding her of the watery croaking of the bullfrog for his mate; and the self-centered passion of the soul

hunter recalled the story of Narcissus infatuated with his own image—which thereafter became to her not a classic legend but a satire on young men with pointed beards. Kind and considerate she always remained, but her deepest and most personal feelings were cased in the comedian's armor of laughter, which is so often the defense of a nature ill at ease in the world. By degrees the appeal of passion had come to amuse her less than it roused her to revolt. She was herself: why should anyone presume to share her life, either as her slave or as her master? Yet she knew that this love of personal independence was the instinct of spinsterhood, and she watched it increase upon her with a very real concern as the golden decade of the twenties advanced year by year. It was in fact the tragedy of her life—if her life can be said to have had a tragedy; for she recognized more and more clearly that her one great chance of happiness lay in love and marriage, and more and more she felt that her existence was empty and profitless. The extremity of her devotion to her father, as she herself was half aware, was the result of an instinct to be of supreme value to somebody.

With regard to Penrhyn she had always a half-conscious misgiving. There was a trace of cynicism in his wit, a brittleness in his good humor, that gave her at times the effect of a lack of breed-

ing, even of moral tone. But for the most part she laid the blame upon herself: it was her foible to be captious with men. She owed him consideration, moreover, for her father's sake.

The Park was deserted at this hour, and when they reached the vine-covered crags that overhung the road at the northern end of it Penrhyn drew up in their refreshing shadows. A great ledge reached out above their heads, breathing earthy sweetness from its mantle of English ivy.

"What a sportsman you are!" he exclaimed, "what a comrade!" He turned in his seat and faced her.

At this moment, as Judith recognized, his glance was more personal than she had ever known it, and more earnest. She shrugged her shoulders, and drew back in her seat.

"You know—what the matter is," he said intensely, almost fiercely. "You must know!"

"I *am* sorry! I hoped it might be different —with you. But it's always this way!"

"Always! You mean that I'm like everybody else?"

"In one respect, yes! Meeting, liking, comrades—a charming comedy. Every friend a different friend, and a delightful friend. You, Stanley, are very different, and very delightful. But then comes the catastrophe that makes all men alike!" She broke off, and presently added with

a sad little smile: "Every time I am deserted I am lonesomer and more forlorn!"

"Lonesome! You can't be more so than I have been, day in and day out, by your very side! You will never know what that has cost me!" He turned his eyes full upon her, and she met them with a quick, courageous glance as if to discover the passion she dreaded to find in him. But now, as always, he exerted his self-control. "You say you are lonesome. You are young now, and will be for many years. But you will never be less alone! And I—*I* am lonesome!—most of all when I am with you, pretending that I don't love you! I can't stand it always." He looked at her resolutely. "This is our last day together—unless you make it the first *together*! Think!"

"Haven't I thought? But the escape! Marry? Marry a man!"

"Marry me!" he flashed, with his amiable air of grotesque. Then he added with a burlesque as of selling stocks: "I advise it."

"A husband is a husband! If you don't have one, I know you are damned. But you are damned even worse if you do!"

"Yet you have always liked to be with men! Why have you never married?"

Judith reflected a while. "Sooner or later, even those I liked most—the way they looked at me was *horrid*! You know what I mean?"

"Of course—the brutes!"

She paused, not quite satisfied. Then she said with the frankness that was so much a part of her: "It may be my fault, too. The one way not to get burned is always to be playing with fire. May's life has been so different from mine—and now look at the blessed dear!"

"The only trouble with you is that the man doesn't live who is worthy of you."

"No, no!" she protested. "It is not that!"

He looked at her intently. "Have you never been in love?"

"Once, when I was eight years old, with my music teacher. He was an Italian, with black, dreamy eyes. For him, I would have done anything! He fell in love with my mother's maid. I was jealous—so jealous that it made me positively ill. But he married her!" She laughed and then continued, quite seriously, "It was years before I got over that. Even now the mood of it comes back to me."

"Yet marriage is the common lot! All our ancestors have gone in for it! Happiness lies in the normal. Isn't it less important whom you marry than to *be* married—granted a few essentials—congeniality, and all that."

Judith shivered. "But those solemn, those awful words in the prayer book!"

"We'll leave out the 'obey.'"

She shook her head. "I could promise to obey. The will is its own master. But to promise to love, to honor a man—a husband—forever!" She broke off with whimsical scorn. "I should hate him in three weeks, and despise myself! And then, there is always the chance——"

"What chance?"

"I have noticed that marriage is often a prison cell that makes the guilty wretch look through the bars upon the world outside—even if it is for the first time—as beautiful!"

"You never cared for anyone more than for me!"

"To go in to dinner with, you are the most charming man in the world. But to come down to breakfast—" She shrugged one shoulder very expressively.

"We'll dine three times a day!"

"Do you call that the normal! It sounds to me like indigestion."

"Yet if you . . . came behind the bars . . . who is there outside to fear?"

She shook her head, and for a moment they were silent.

All around them was midsummer verdure, fresh and abundant, through which, far ahead, there was a glimpse of the city, bathed in the glow of the early evening sky. She had almost forgotten

Penrhyn in the beauty of it when he turned upon her with the air of confronting her.

"You mean Wistar!"

Again she shrugged her shoulder. "Among the others—perhaps!"

He flushed with anger, and took from his pocket an evening paper, which he had bought on the sidewalk—the world was always with him—and turned to a report, apparently more authentic than those that had preceded it, of the combination of foreign manufacturers. "If this is true, they've stolen a march on us—and all on account of James Wistar & Co.! For the sake of an obstinate idea, a blind prejudice, he is ready to wreck everything. Do you remember the last time one of your father's promotions failed? Except for your presence of mind, the ball would have struck not his shoulder but his heart! Wistar is forcing him to the wall. I am working to save him. Whenever you see his poor, lame arm, remember that!"

She met his plea bravely and not without resentment. "The moment you lose faith," she said, "you are to say so!"

"Of course!"

"As for my future—if the worst comes to the worst, I can work!" Already, as she now told him, she had had the offer of a position as managing saleswoman in a new and fashionable bureau

of home supplies. The salary would be small, but enough to live on—even to provide for her father; and she looked forward to a life of self-supporting usefulness as far better than her existence of the past few years.

"Of course! Why, of course," he repeated, this time with a more accurate note of conviction.

"As for Mr. Wistar," she went on, with her instinctive honesty, "he is not quite as bad as you say. He would give anything in the world not to oppose us—except his opinions."

"Are you afraid," he demanded, "to leave Wistar outside the bars?"

"Afraid!" she repeated with sudden animation. "No! Of all the men I have ever known, he is the most *horrid*!"

"The blackguard!"

"That is," she added in a voice that was unwontedly impersonal, "of all the *nice* men."

He was silent a long time. "I'm trying to think it out," he presently said. "You're not unmarried from choice?"

"That's what makes it so hopeless. The girls who glory most to be old maids are the first to—what do they call it?—make their catches?"

"Pity the case of poor Judith! She was loved by twenty and married none: and in the end the gray-headed seamstress who never had a lover was no worse an old maid than she!"

"The gray hairs!" she laughed, "I've had them since I was eighteen. I can pluck them out! But the old-maid ways—I watch them growing one by one. You can't pluck *them* out! They are a part of you!"

"Then let *me* love you!" he cried, almost forgetting himself in a moment of passion. But he went on, with a quick touch of grotesque: "It's got to be somebody!" Then he added with appealing, childlike persuasiveness: "Let's be comrades—bachelor comrades!"

"But still there would be the bars!"

"In another year you will be thirty!"

"Two years, almost—you are very unkind! But then—you don't need to tell me!—I *shall* be a real old maid."

"You promise, when you are that, to—to be comrades? That is the best part of being married. That is what marriage comes to, in the end, if it is happy—in spite of all the romance of believing otherwise. Why not begin with reason and sense?"

She was silent. Overhead a large gray squirrel, that would leap upon anyone's forearm for a peanut in the Mall, dashed out upon the crag and chattered at them with ecstatic resentment against this invasion of his wilding citadel. But it would have taken some one much more deeply versed than Judith in the wisdom of the heart to spell the

present warning for her implied in his diminutive rage.

"It *sounds* sensible," she said.

"Then promise!" He reached forth both hands.

She drew back at first, and then took one of them in a feminine version of a masculine hand-shake—which was about as near the real thing as if she had thrown a stone. "Comrades!" she said. "When I am a *real* old maid!"

Penrhyn's face lighted, but his discretion was admirable, and he said no more.

There was a gas light just in front of them that burned with a dense, white flame. The lamp-lighter came up with his ladder and snorting hand-lamp and lighted it, eying them furtively.

Penrhyn cranked the engine and sped away down the hill.

Judith looked back at the wooded nook they were leaving. "It is such a beautiful world," she said sadly.

CHAPTER XIII

PENRHYN lived in the Benedick, on the west side of Washington Square and so near the Searses, across the corner of the square, that the front windows commanded a view of one another. He had moved here when he first met Judith, accepting the name of the house, so satirical in its application to the abode of resolute bachelors, as augury of a better fate for himself. It was late when he drew up before the white marble portal of Judith's house, but he made an excuse of the nearness of his quarters and entered with her. They went upstairs to the library, and he took a place near the window, where he could watch for the arrival of the messenger from Andrews.

The old mansion had a charm for Penrhyn which was not altogether to be explained by the fact that it was associated with the woman he loved. It had been furnished, it is true, in the sixth decade of the past century, in the height of the era of black walnut and haircloth, when Judith's father and mother had begun life as young married folk; and the prevailing mid-Victorian

spirit had not been changed—at first, after Mrs. Sears's death, for sentimental reasons, as Penrhyn had somehow come to understand, and afterwards for reasons of economy as well. The general effect was not as ugly, however, as might have been expected. The ill repute of black walnut is largely due to the elaborate tastelessness of the forms into which it was so often wrought: in itself it is one of the most beautiful woods. The furniture of the Sears mansion was in the simplest and most substantial mode of the time, and Judith had had the good sense not to offend its somber dignity by mingling with it anything suggestive of the lighter and more elegant modern modes. Numerous old engravings and mezzotints, together with excellent copies in oil of Italian Masters fashionable half a century ago, lent a very real beauty to the walls. And old tapestries and rugs, the first expressions of Judith's good taste, harmoniously intensified the effect of color. An abundance of books, bound in dull reds and browns, gave an impression of intimate liveability. The dimensions of the rooms themselves were ample testimony of the good taste of the beginning of the past century, and the impressive classical moldings and old mahogany doors were of a beauty that our builders have never since approached.

The two were scarcely seated when Mr. Sears

came into the room, already dressed for dinner, except that his jacket hung loosely from one shoulder. He was evidently in low spirits; but he greeted them with his accustomed courtesy, and proffered the loose lapel to Judith. "Your pardon," he said to Penrhyn. "My game shoulder! Judith always helps me."

"Blue imps again, sweetheart?" she said, giving a final feminine tug at his tie. "I'm off to dress, but I'll be back in a little jiffy!" As she went out she turned and cautioned Penrhyn not to be late himself.

When she had gone, Sears held up a paper which he carried in his hand. "Do you know how this was sent to me?" he asked—"the list of Wistar's allies, their resources and their year's output?"

"Andrews!" Penrhyn exclaimed in anger. "The scoundrel! The idiot! I told him to send it to me!"

"You!" said Sears in a low voice, horror and reprobation spreading upon his face.

For a moment Penrhyn was embarrassed. In the old man's own house—the atmosphere of generations of cultivation—it was not so easy to disregard his dignity. "I never agreed to it," he protested. "Andrews went ahead and did it." He offered to take the paper, nevertheless. But Sears withheld it.

There was a knock at the door and a middle-aged serving woman came in. "A party to see you, sir," she said to Sears. "Not very respectable. A little in the drink, sir, if you'll pardon me."

"With red side whiskers?" Penrhyn asked quickly. "Pack him off at once!"

As he spoke, however, those same whiskers appeared at the door, framing a pasty face and faded blue eyes that were swimming in alcoholic felicity. "Not quite so soon, Penrhyn," Andrews chipped in jauntily. Seeing that Sears held the paper, however, his manner changed. "Oh, my missive has reached you?" he said. "Then I'm off! Only wanted to make sure. Remember, midnight! *Ow revower!*" He bowed with an elaborate courtesy—an inebriate reflection from his environment.

Penrhyn strode toward the door and caught him by the collar. "I told you to cut out the drink!" he cried; "and I told you to send that matter to me!"

Andrews hesitated a moment, and then said nonchalantly: "I was interrupted."

"Interrupted! What do you mean?"

"Old Wistar come back."

"What!"

"He cut out them slips with his pocketknife; but he left the figures and told me to send 'em to

anyone I wanted. This here he added out of his head." Andrews took one corner of the paper, and focusing his blissful eyes on it began to read Wistar's note with stumbling care.

"You made out you were doing it for us?" Penrhyn interrupted angrily.

"Made out? Made out nothing! He tried to make me own it was you bribed me. I gave him a steer. He don't know I sent it to your old pal here."

"Silence!" Sears exclaimed in dignified anger. "Leave my house."

Neither of the others heeded him.

"That's a likely story," said Penrhyn.

"Likely or not, it's true. Try him and see. If he knows, then you don't have to pay me. That's all."

"You could have told him you were doing it on your own—for Irvingdale Smith—as you have done before!"

"It's lucky for you I didn't! You'd never 'a' seed this! And it's lucky for me! Where'd my graft been, heigh?" At this thought, Andrews's loose features became set and his eyes focused. "Look a' here, Penrhyn," he said ominously, "you want them facts, and I want the twenty centuries. You got the facts, you and your pardner. I want the money. And there's something more: when Wistar found me crackin' his safe he gave

me the sack. I lost my job along o' you, and I want damages. Three-fifty a day, six days a week! See?"

"Rubbish!" said Penrhyn contemptuously. "You get what I promised. That's enough."

"Not on your tintype! I like this here trust o' yourn, and if Wistar goes pals with you I'm going to put my two thou. into it. Meantime I got to live."

Sears had been speechless, revolted and horror-struck. "This is no place for such bickering," he at last found voice to say. "I shall not soil my house nor my hands with such dealings!" The other two were silent, and he concluded with less vehemence: "And Wistar may be here any moment!"

"He's comin' too, is he?" Andrews put in with cool significance. "If you don't promise the swag I'll stop him on your doorsteps and tell him who done him! That'll spoil your dinner party!" Both men were silent, and Andrews continued, his voice becoming unctuously sentimental: "He's been good to me! He could 'a' let me in for twenty years in stir, but instead o' that he put me to the good. My two thousand, see! *And* my salar*ee*!"

"Wistar knows that some of us received this!" Sears said dully. "We can't explain that!"

Penrhyn was thoughtful. Unless he could find

some way of throwing Wistar off the track, he knew very well that the last hope was gone of ever winning him over.

Andrews had been thinking too. "Old Wistar made a little mistake," he said with oily cunning. "You jes' lissen here! You remember—Irvingdale Smith did come to see Wistar! Wistar don't know that, but he knows Smith is gettin' cold feet, and wants to give you folks the skiddoo. But Wistar won't have him—being bigoted, and not able to forget bygones. That's straight goods, every word. Savvy? All you'se got to lie about is that I done the job for Smith *as* usual."

Penrhyn nodded. He needed a scapegoat—needed it badly. And chance had given him the best. The chief thing now was to get Andrews out of the house and away without Wistar's seeing him. The hall room next the library was Mr. Sears's study, and Penrhyn led the man into it, advising Mr. Sears to let him out through the hall as soon as Wistar was safely in the library.

When the two were alone, however, Sears said firmly: "You understand that I wash my hands of all this? It is theft! It is treachery!"

"That's what they call it when you fail. When you succeed—and we're going to succeed—you're the Napoleon of Wall Street!" He reached for the paper.

Sears withheld it.

"Permit me to remind you," Penrhyn urged, "this was sent for me. The thing has been done. I'm in for it. If I'm killed, I'll not be killed for a lamb. With one glance I can tell where we stand." He caught the paper, and took it with gentle force. "Strong!" he exclaimed, when he had glanced down the list. "Fight *him*! There's nothing in that for the underwriter! Only more work for the undertaker!" He sat down in a chair and pondered.

Sears sat down too, the image of despair, and buried his face in his hands.

In a moment Penrhyn leaped to his feet. "Andrews is right! If Wistar doesn't know we've got the list, he hasn't an atom of proof! In five minutes I can snow him down—snow him under!"

Mr. Sears did not raise his head. "You have ruined everything," he said. "Once for all, I refuse to be a party to your schemes!"

"At least you will let me get Andrews out of here past Wistar! You can't want to compromise me—and yourself!"

"Compromise *me*, sir! I have kept my hands clean. I cannot be compromised!" His indignation shaded into despair, and he added, "All dealings are at an end between us."

Penrhyn's mood mounted. "Wait and see!"

he exclaimed. "This blunder has thrown the whole game into our hands!"

Judith came in, putting the last touches on the lace of her gown. "Stanley!" she cried in surprise. "Here yet? You must hurry!"

As Penrhyn was leaving he caught Mr. Sears's eye, and then, with a sidelong tilt of his head, glanced toward the study door.

CHAPTER XIV

JUDITH knew only too well the mood in which she found her father.

He had begun life as a rich young man with family, cultivation and a ıost of friends. If his lot had been cast in the ›resent generation he would have been a working ociologist, a reform politician, or a patron of the ırts. But in the generation of the Civil War the ıses of a leisure class were little valued. It was ›usiness or nothing. For many years he had been ıble to form companies and exploit his ideas; and hough he had always ended in failure, he had, as ›romoter and manager of successive enterprises, 'eceived no small sums in bonuses and salary. But ıe had never undergone any real business train- ng, and he had not a sufficiently strong sense ›f the facts of life to save him from his imagina- ion. The outskirts of Wall Street are full of ıuch men, and those of them are happiest who :ome to the end of their tether while they are /oung enough to learn. In his case, the time when ıis friends came to distrust him arrived tardily.

Then, already in middle life, ensued a period when, in his search for capital, he approached distant acquaintances, even strangers. To a man of his aristocratic breeding, the ordeal was painful; but he never flinched. Finally, however, the time had come when he was limited to his own means, and risked the last of it.

To Judith had fallen the duty of encouraging and sustaining him through the later and more painful stages of his descent. What she had suffered with him from the rebuffs of ill-bred strangers only the gentle feminine heart can know. But from childhood she had stood by him, and she had never found a better means of coping with his despondency than her girlish heart had taught her. So now she put her hand on his head, caressed it, and bade him go with her to the big chair in the den.

He mechanically obeyed until she had laid her hand on the door knob. Then he started, and led her back to a black walnut chair by the library table.

"This ugly old chair isn't half so snug and comfy!" she protested. But it was no time to oppose him. She sat on one knee, threw her arms about his shoulders and laid her soft, bright cheek against his blanching temples. "Is he sad because people are stupid?" she said, unconsciously falling into the language of her childhood. "We

shall forget them, and then they will be the losers! We still have *us*!"

"Forget!" he lamented. "Poverty never forgets. When the horses went, I promised that should be the last sacrifice. But now—we've failed again, and it's this house—your house! They will foreclose, and we shall be evicted like Irish peasants! Think of it! This ugly old furniture—which we love—how hideous it will look when it is put up here at public auction, when it is dumped out on the sidewalk for all the world to see!"

"But we haven't failed yet! We can make Mr. Wistar see how wrong he is. I *feel* that we can! Then we shall have new and beautiful furniture, the horses back—everything!"

He shook his head. "Too late! It's all spoiled. At last I am done for! The world used to seem full of opportunity. Everything turns out the same. Hope and despair—over and over! When I was young—when we fellows fresh from college started in Wall Street together, it was to me they looked to do the great things. I had the ideas. I had the money. One by one they have passed me by. Myrick owns the Wanawackson. Ponter *is* the Clothiers' Bank. Horting is everything! When he is abroad the comic papers cartoon him as the Yankee Peril. He is received in every court of Europe like royalty!

At the club they all try to be just the good old chaps they always were. But they are so careful not to hurt my feelings — it amounts to an insult!"

It was true, every word of it, and it fell upon Judith's heart like a blight. But still she labored with him. "You've always been honest!" she urged. "That's more than most of them can say!"

He raised his eyes with a harassed look, and glanced toward the study door.

She took his forehead in her palms and kissed it. Then she attempted to kiss his mild, tired eyes. He shook his head, and put her gently away—always since childhood he had done so. "You will never let me kiss your eyes," she complained. "And they are such dear, tender eyes! I know I could make you happy if I could kiss them once—only once!"

He was silent a long time. "I will tell you, dearest. Your mother . . . she used to do that! And she could cheer me that way when everything else failed. The last time she kissed me so—do you remember it?—it was the night before May was born—the last evening of all!"

Judith hid her face on his shoulder.

"Of course you didn't know it, but she was always afraid you children would come between us —jealous of you, she used to call it! That is the

way she was! And that is why I have never let you. . . . It is the last thing she still owns upon earth!"

Judith forced down the catch in her throat and smiled through her tears. "No! Not the last!" she cried. "She still has us! And we must be cheerful—as she would make us, if she were here! This venture—I still hope!—but if it fails—" She paused, reflecting. The idea of her working had always filled her father with an old-fashioned horror, but it was all the more necessary that he should become accustomed to it. "If it fails," she concluded, plucking up resolution, "you know, they want me at the Home Stores. I can still work!"

He rose from the chair in agitation. "Selling soups and poultices from the kitchen! Serving your old friends—my old friends—with afternoon tea! For five generations our family has been—what it *has* been! There is little enough left in America of the old, the true gentility! But we have done our best to stand for our traditions! The Home Stores! What do you know of that sort of thing? They only want you for your name to serve as a vulgar advertisement! I can't stand it—to have it said that I brought our ideals to penury!"

It was the side of her father's nature with which she had least sympathy. "Ideals, Daddy!" she

cried. "*My* ideals are of service and usefulness! Rich or poor, I believe in work! Work for the world, and, if you can't do that, all the more work for your own self-respect! The only disgrace I feel is poverty—genteel poverty in idleness! It is so easy to do what one must—with a wee bit of sense and good humor!" She took him by the arm and forced him gently back into the chair. "Oh, Daddy! If you could ever understand me! Mother—she would have understood! And she would have let me bring you peace!" Judith leaned over to kiss his eyes; but he bowed his head, so she kissed the brows above them.

"With you a shopgirl—a waitress—and I a homeless bankrupt—I can't sink down to the grave like that!"

There was something ominous to Judith in the set, tense quiet of his voice. With a quick, resolute movement she opened the drawer of the table beside her and took out his revolver. "Father! I want you to promise me——"

"Promise what?" he asked.

She paused. There are certain words that will not be spoken, though all her instincts told her that she must deal with him roundly. "Why do you keep this?" she asked. "A burglar couldn't get in here! There's much more danger in my room. I'm going to take it there."

He met her eyes with forbidding pride. "I can still do the family burglar hunting," he said, and taking the revolver he put it back in the drawer. "Penrhyn," he reassured her, "has not yet lost hope. He is able and full of resources." But there was something in the way he spoke that intensified Judith's anxiety.

Boyser knocked and, entering, announced Wistar.

Sears started. "I have a few things to do," he said, and went into the study.

When Wistar came in Judith started involuntarily, his look was so gloomy and perplexed. She offered her hand, and he hesitated before he took it.

"May I speak for a moment to your father?" he said.

"Surely!" she answered. But when she went to the study door she found to her surprise that it was locked. She shook the knob gently and paused. "He said he had some things to attend to. Of course he'll be out in a moment!" As she spoke, however, she drew open the table drawer, and made sure that the revolver was there.

"How do you interpret the laws of hospitality?" Wistar demanded.

"Such a serious question! *What* does it mean?"

"If a man has reason to think another his enemy, is he right to become his guest?"

"I try to believe in people until I know they are bad! Surely—why do you ask?"

"Because I love you!" He spoke with a vehemence that shook his frame, though his voice was low and, except for the deep vibrance of emotion, under full control. "I want to help you. This war they are forcing me into—God knows I am trying to avoid it! But they are making that impossible!"

The hall door opened, and May entered with Billy. "*What* is Andrews doing here?" she asked. "As he passed us on the stairs his breath was like a searchlight!"

"Andrews!" Wistar cried out. "Here!"

No one answered, and the talk turned with a somewhat enforced lightness upon the young people. By and by Penrhyn came in, and finding that Mr. Sears was in the study, went in, the door being now unlocked. Presently the two came out together.

"Mr. Sears," Wistar demanded, "may I have a moment's talk with you?" The discovery that Andrews had been there before him had removed his last doubt. To accept Sears's hospitality seemed now quite impossible, and he resolved to end the negotiation by confronting him with the full evidence of his guilt.

"Business—before dinner?" Penrhyn asked, somewhat in the manner in which a governess cries "manners" to naughty children.

"If you please!"

"If it's going to be unpleasant," Judith put in, "mayn't we wait? At least we can dine as friends." Wistar hesitated. He was in a delicate position, but he felt that it would be kinder to do what he had to do without risk of exposing the old man to those he loved. "If you command it!" he said at last.

"I do!" Judith answered firmly.

Boyser announced that dinner was served.

"If your scruples will permit," Judith said lightly.

"It is on *your* scruples I am acting!" he answered. Then he added, "Let us eat, drink and be merry!"

"Dear me!" she exclaimed, as she went out with him, "you frighten me about to-morrow!"

Sears motioned Penrhyn to follow.

Penrhyn forcibly detained him. "I have been doing some tall thinking," he said, "and I've decided to tell you something that only a crisis like the present could induce me to tell anybody. You think this motor trust is a big thing. It is only a wheel within a wheel! I must speak quickly: mark every word. You remember that rumor of an attempt to monopolize crude rubber?

I'm in with the people who are making it. It is only as their agent that I am dealing with you and Wistar. For two years we've had a man in South America getting concessions—leading revolutions where he can't buy them, and financing the government against insurgents where he can. Already we hold grants that cover the richest rubber country on this continent. To-day we are at work in Belgium for control of the Congo, and our agents report the best of progress. Before the year is over we shall control three-quarters of the rubber supply of the world."

Sears was still under sway of his repugnance to what Penrhyn had done. "All that has nothing to do with me," he said.

"Nothing to do with you? As long as every Tom, Dick and Harry can make a motor car and sell it, what sort of a monopoly do you expect to gain?"

"No monopoly, but a trust may be profitable without it."

"Profitable! Perhaps—if dollars in driblets mean profit. What we want is the wealth that is power. Rubber means tires, and no tires no bubble wagons! Where's your imagination? Working together, we can make old John D. look like thirty cents."

The old man's eyes dilated.

"Ah, *now* your imagination is getting busy!"

Imagination was, in fact, Sears's long suit, and, as Penrhyn had foreseen, it was working, and working overtime.

"But the law?" Sears objected.

"What has our fool law to do with the Amazon, the Orinoco and the Congo? A corporation formed in London can give your New Jersey trumperies cards and spades."

The old man was silent, but his eyes continued to dilate.

"Come, they'll miss us downstairs," said Penrhyn, and he led the way.

CHAPTER XV

IN spite of the excess of men in the party, May insisted on sitting between Judith and Billy, and she so managed that Wistar sat on Judith's other side. Penrhyn welcomed the arrangement, for it brought him next Sears with Billy beyond, and he took the occasion to allude lightly to the fact that the two young people were members of factions at deadly enmity—called them Romeo and Juliet, and said he saw their finish in a tomb. It was only a step from this to banter about trusts and trust-busting; and presently the discussion became serious, though not too concrete or personal for table talk. Wistar observed, none the less, that Billy was developing a new hospitality toward the ideas of the promoters. When his young cousin asked him for his opinions, he smiled gravely and referred him to a scholastic essay on The Case Against the Trusts.

Wistar observed also that several times during the dinner Penrhyn engaged Mr. Sears in whispered conversation, and that what he said brought

a look of distress. At the sight of it he dreaded, as he had never dreaded anything before, the time when he should be forced to confront the old man with the evidence of so ignoble a crime.

When Judith rose to leave, at the advent of coffee and cigars, May was in a flood of garrulous plans for her wedding—though she was not to be married until she was out of school, almost two years hence. Judith was to be maid of honor, she was saying, and Wistar, Billy's best man.

At the door Judith turned back. "Maya!" she cried, laughing.

May paused for a moment, looked up, quite mystified.

"Engagements only last till tobacco do us part!"

May's mystification gave way to a blush, which was greeted with sympathetic laughter. As she followed Judith to the drawing room, Billy went with her to the door, and Wistar went with him, glad of any pleasantry that would defer the unwelcome crisis.

"And now," said Penrhyn, when he and Sears were alone, "now for a hell of a long put!" No one was better aware than himself that he had foozled what he intended as a drive upon the green.

"It is no use," Sears lamented. "You have spoiled everything."

"You know the alternative: unless I hole out now—we're two down and one to play."

"Our game, as you call it, is already up. After what you have done to-day no man of honor could go with you."

"I tell you I never asked him to—to do what he did. And you don't have to go with me. All you have to do is to sit tight! Everything is playing into our hands. Billy is engaged to May—and I've just discovered that Wistar is over heels with Judith! Let him make a row, charge us with treason, stratagems and spoils! The angrier, the more violent he is, the more he will disgust Onderdonk and humiliate himself! I will make him apologize abjectly for every word against us. And in the end I will force him to eat out of our hands! Think, man, think of the stake!"

Sears still shook his head, but his eyes, as Penrhyn was quick to detect, were opened wide, as if to a vision.

When Wistar and Billy returned, Penrhyn was sipping his coffee, his elbows upon the table. "Well, fellows," he said with familiar good nature, "this afternoon as it happened, while we were proposing one alliance with Mr. Sears, Onderdonk was obliged to be absent—concluding another and, it must be confessed, more important alliance! Now we should like to ask what he thinks of this minor proposition."

"I must say I'm inclined to change my mind," Billy said, somewhat sheepishly. "This doesn't seem like the old-fashioned octopus—not the bill-poster kind Barnum used to make! It looks like velvet, but it wears better."

"One minute!" interrupted Wistar. "I have to discuss with the promoters one or two facts of a private nature." He asked Onderdonk if he would mind leaving them for a moment.

"What concerns the rest of us," Penrhyn quickly interposed, "concerns Onderdonk!"

"In such a matter," Mr. Sears said, "I should be glad to trust Mr. Wistar's judgment."

"Of course I shan't stay!" said Billy.

Wistar followed him to the drawing-room door, his hand on his cousin's shoulder, with friendly words of apology.

The two were no sooner out of the room than Penrhyn turned sharply upon Sears. "You have thrown away the chance I've been playing for all evening! Unless we make a monkey of Wistar before Billy, what's the use of making him a monkey?"

"I couldn't face him," Sears answered sadly. "My own son, almost!"

When Wistar returned he remained standing by the door. "As you know," he said, his voice quiet but intense, "I stayed beneath this roof only to avoid making a scene. I have questions to ask

so ugly I propose to adjourn to neutral ground—a club, or, better, a hotel!"

Penrhyn glanced at Sears. "This, I take it, is purely a business dinner as if we were at a hotel?"

Wistar was surprised at Penrhyn's self-possession, for by this time he must have learned of the fate of Andrews's attempt. He was even more surprised to find that Sears so easily acquiesced. Was it possible, after all, that there was a mistake somewhere? "I have very strong evidence," he said, "that the promoters of your combination have resorted to unfair means—bribery of one of my men, and theft of my papers."

Penrhyn lifted his eyebrows. "That is an ugly charge. You have full proof of it?"

"If I had I shouldn't be here."

Penrhyn became grave and at the same time vehement. "Am I to understand that you have brought this charge on a mere suspicion?"

"I make no charge. I state facts! I found Andrews breaking my safe to steal information vital to you in the fight with which you threaten me."

"And you conclude that *we* bribed him to do it?"

"I am forced to that conclusion!"

Penrhyn rose to his feet, still grave, almost magisterial, but with a ring of righteous contempt in his voice. "You have broken my old friend's

bread, and eaten his salt, and you use the occasion to urge against him—or is it against his guest?—the most shameful charge, utterly without evidence! Which of us do you suspect?"

Wistar flushed at the injustice of the accusation, but that was a minor matter. He took the card from his pocket, and gave it to Mr. Sears. "As far as I can judge from what remains of the name, this is your card. And look at the back of it."

Penrhyn's face fell. A cog had slipped in the mechanism of his plan—here was an eventuality which in the rush of events he had not foreseen as possible. Wistar noted the change, and a sardonic gleam came into his eyes. But in a moment the man took courage, picked up the card and examined it with an air of thoughtful impartiality. Then his face beamed. "You are as wrong in your facts," he exclaimed venomously, "as you are caddish and treacherous in acting on them." He rose as he spoke and quickly left the room.

Wistar's glance followed him with amazement and swelling anger; and when Penrhyn returned he met him at the door. But Penrhyn passed him and coolly resumed his seat at the far side of the table, facing Wistar, where he stood.

"When I got here," Wistar said calmly, but with intense latent passion, "Andrews was closeted with Mr. Sears."

Sears was speechless. Penrhyn was scarcely less taken aback. Another cog had slipped—this time a dangerous one. His confidence was on the verge of collapse.

Wistar noted their consternation. But his more generous regard for the old man had now melted in rage at the young man's insolence. He strode forward to the table and confronted Penrhyn. "Tell me now," he cried, "who is the traitor and the cad!"

As he spoke he heard the door open behind him, but his blood was boiling in his temples, and he heeded nothing but the man into whose eyes he was glaring.

Penrhyn meanwhile had again gained command of himself, and indeed a renewal of confidence. His manner became softer and more diplomatic. "I repeat," he said, "that you have insulted your host."

The veins in Wistar's temples began to swell, and the color of blood suffused his vision. "It is I who have been insulted," he said, his low voice swelling until it filled the room. "The promoter of this combination came to my office as my friend, to ask a service—and used the occasion to commit bribery and theft! He has plotted with the thief even while I was under his roof. No deeper insult is possible, no baser breach of hospitality!"

Penrhyn leaped to his feet. "Silence, you

blackguard!" he exclaimed. "Look who is present!"

Wistar turned and saw Judith standing on the threshold, white and quivering. For a moment he was dumfounded. Then he said: "May I beg you to leave us?" He added with an outburst of abhorrence: "The blackguard is the man who brought you to witness such a scene!"

"I will stay," she said firmly. "What does it all mean?" She went to her father where he was still sitting at the foot of the table, and put her palms on the white, silken hair of his temples. She was dignified and proudly calm; and, as Wistar recognized with a pang of admiration that even his rage could not down, she was superbly beautiful, and supremely appealing. For beneath her exterior of self-control she was swayed by the primal instinct of protecting love.

Penrhyn did not fail to note his advantage. "Well?" he said.

Controlling himself, Wistar showed Judith the card, and told how he had come by it.

"It was on account of that," Penrhyn cut in, "that I asked you in here. When you went out of the office, as I remember, you left your hand bag on the desk. Your card was in it?"

Judith inclined her head.

"And what does that explain?" Wistar asked.

"As I remember—when Miss Sears wrote her note this afternoon, there was no paper in the desk."

"There was none. But what has that to do with Mr. Sears's card?"

"I don't admit that it is Mr. Sears's card. But suppose it is. Girls usually carry their men folks' pasteboards. It's a useful way they have of making our calls for us."

Wistar saw the force of the explanation, and also its weakness. "Then who *am* I to suppose gave the bribe? You yourself were alone with Andrews—and you show a most thorough knowledge of all the circumstances!"

"Miss Sears will remember," Penrhyn said, calmly turning to Judith, "that on a certain sentimental occasion in the paint room she missed her handkerchief, and sent me for her bag." Then he faced Wistar. "I am not insensible of your insult; but we will proceed to matters that are important."

"I beg that you will. You have still to explain who bribed Andrews!"

"That does not concern Mr. Sears," Penrhyn retorted boldly. "But if I may be allowed a suggestion, we were not your only visitors. You remember your friend, Smith? He is in town, you say, and has business with you?"

Wistar nodded to both questions.

"This matter that Andrews was stealing—has Smith any motives for desiring it?"

"The same motives that you have," Wistar acknowledged. "But there is not the same evidence against him."

"Still, he has already had dealings with Andrews of precisely the same nature."

"I am inclined to think so."

"His full name is——"

"Irvingdale Smith."

"And if we argue that this is his card?"

Wistar looked at the card. "I couldn't disprove it, and I don't need to!" Then he paused. Strong as was the evidence that he had blundered, he would gladly have rested under the weight of it rather than continue in his defense. But the matter at stake was greater than any personal consideration. "All that," he said slowly, "does not explain why, when I arrived here this evening, Andrews was under this roof."

There was an ominous pause, in which Judith let her hands fall from her father's temples, and looked into Penrhyn's face with sudden anxiety.

"Neither can *I* explain it," Penrhyn said, with his air of frankness. "All I know is what Mr. Sears tells me. When he came home this afternoon there was a pile of letters on the hall table —the accumulated mail of the day; and when he had dressed he went to his den to attend to them.

Before he had opened them Andrews called, and said that he had sent a message by mistake. He identified it as his own by the handwriting of the address. Mind, I only state the facts. I can't understand how Andrews could have made such a blunder." Penrhyn had spoken in the manner of a judge who impartially weighs evidence. But he concluded with incisive sarcasm: "Can *you* understand?"

"I told him to send it to whoever he wished, and promised not to look at the address."

"You will pardon me if I say that that is the most extraordinary proceeding—to me incomprehensible. No doubt you have your reasons. But might not Andrews have mistrusted you, and sent the letter to a false address, hoping to recover it—as he did recover it? If you ask me, I say that at this moment it is in the hands of Irvingdale Smith. What do you think?"

Wistar looked to Mr. Sears. The old man's face was tense and set, but void of any decipherable expression. Wistar was dazed, almost giddy; but little by little the conviction forced itself upon him that he had blundered, blundered egregiously. "What you say is possible," he admitted. "No doubt I am wrong."

Penrhyn's voice changed to one of regret, even sorrow. "You caught at the first suspicion to insult my old colleague—your host!" Wistar re-

mained humbly silent, and Penrhyn turned to Judith. "Mr. Wistar has questioned my conduct in inflicting this painful scene upon you. I feel that he was right. I also, perhaps, have played the blackguard. But in my first horror at what he charged, I felt that the matter had to be disproved once for all, and to that purpose your evidence was essential. Yet I now see that, knowing you as I do, and your father, I should have ignored the charge."

Wistar was still looking at Sears. "What can I say, sir," he pleaded, "what can I ever do——"

Sears shook his head.

Wistar turned to Judith. "Can you ever forgive me? I beg—I beg——"

"I have nothing to forgive you," Judith answered in a dry voice.

"Then you understand—" With the hope of her forgiveness his voice choked.

"I understand this—that it is *I*—who am to blame, that it is *I* who have to beg your pardon!"

She seemed about to say more, but paused and left the room.

Wistar bowed his head, crushed as he was bewildered.

CHAPTER XVI

WHEN Judith had gone Sears broke his long silence. "I understand your motives," he said to Wistar, "and I thank you for coming to me openly, at once." He seemed about to say more, but Penrhyn interrupted him.

"If Mr. Wistar is willing to get down to business," he said, "we will call Onderdonk."

"I thank you, sir!" Wistar exclaimed to Sears. Then he added: "I will get Onderdonk."

When he was gone, Sears turned upon Penrhyn. "You have been intolerable!" he exclaimed. "I had resolved to tell him everything as it happened, as far as it concerned me. But you prevented—put a lie in my mouth, and gagged me!"

"Lucky I did! That was the narrowest squeak I ever had, or wish to have! Twice I thought he had us! How the devil did he get wind of Andrews here?"

Boyser came in with a tray of decanters, siphons and glasses.

"Which will you have?" Penrhyn broke off, indicating the Scotch and the rye, "Blond or Brunette?" The old man shook his head, and Penrhyn drew a long glass of Scotch, listening in delight to the clink of the huge lump of ice as it swirled in the gaseous maelstrom.

When Wistar and Onderdonk came back they proposed that, as it was already late, the party had best meet again on Monday. Penrhyn very reasonably suggested, however, that they ought to outline the proposition to Billy so that he could consider it in the meantime. The combination was to be strictly legal, he said—both he and Mr. Sears pledged themselves to that. Wistar was to be chief stockholder and chairman of the executive committee—a position which would give him the practical management of the whole. As long as he wished they would use all their influence to keep him in power. Penrhyn's manner was now that of easy and confiding friendship. "In short," he concluded to Wistar, "the combination will be you!—as honest as you are honest."

"The case is not quite as simple as that," Wistar said to Billy. "You remember Minot's transmission gear I told you about? This afternoon I agreed to form a company for him and put him at the head. He is as much against the trusts as I, and I doubt if he will come in. If he does,

he will insist on having a place on the executive committee."

"You don't expect to have all your friends, and only your friends?" Penrhyn objected.

"Precisely! And that is why I am telling Billy that the case is more difficult than you say. I know Minot, and I know the value of that invention of his. It will make him one of the strongest men in the industry, and he is well aware of the fact. If he came in, I doubt if he would consent to be a mere executive. He would probably want the job you offer me." Wistar smiled, but with an earnestness that made what he said more impressive. "I speak of this only to show the kind of problem that is always confronting a corporation."

Bidding Mr. Sears good night, he went out, and Billy followed. At the drawing-room door he hesitated, but he passed on into the street without bidding Judith good-by.

When he had gone Sears dropped his head in his hands, again a prey to despair. "We have lost him," he said.

"Not yet!" said Penrhyn. "I have one more crack at him Monday!"

"Are you willing to take in Minot?"

"Not in a thousand years! Wistar and Billy will be hard enough to manage. With a majority of trust-busters on that committee, where should

we be when it came to joining hands with the rubber people? Cheer up, man! You look as if you had lost your last dollar!"

"I have lied—lied to my guest—and to my daughter!"

"A mere matter of business! One stroke more, and we've pulled off the biggest combination in the history of Wall Street!"

"But that stroke! He is too clear-headed, too resolute."

"Nonsense! Don't you see? He's in love with Judith, and he has insulted you! He's a ringed bull. We can lead him where we want by the nose! And once we've got him inside—we have him where we want him."

Sears turned away in disgust. "If you could do what you say, I should refuse to profit by such baseness!"

Penrhyn's tone became suddenly persuasive. "Think what's at stake! This afternoon we were in danger of that foreign combination. Win over Wistar, and we have it in our power to make the American automobile the best in the world, to force it upon the markets of France and Italy themselves, to make our combination one of the bulwarks of national prosperity. That is your dream! Together we shall realize it. Wistar has a soul too small for ideas like that!"

Sears was silent.

Penrhyn looked at his watch. It was almost midnight, and he remembered his appointment with Andrews. "I must be off!" he said. At the door he turned. "From to-night Judith is rich again, and you take your proper place in the world of finance!"

CHAPTER XVII

FROM girlhood the white hair and increasing dependence of age had appealed to Judith's tenderest reverence, even though the object of it was a beggar on the street. And now the affections which many women pour into the channels of wifehood and motherhood she lavished upon her aging father. There was nothing, she felt, which he must resent as deeply as this insult to what he would have called his honor as a gentleman. That Wistar stood ready to thwart the last ambition of his life she must, in the end, have forgiven; but that he should preface his attack by so crude and gross an affront was not to be endured—least of all from a man who professed ardent and faithful love.

Her own pride, she felt, was even more deeply concerned. As she reviewed their conversation of the afternoon she realized—what she had not realized before—that she had taken advantage of the moment when he was pleading his love for her to urge him against his conscience in her fa-

ther's behalf. She had meant what she said on quitting the dining room—that she owed him an apology. But it was an apology of humbled pride, not of understanding.

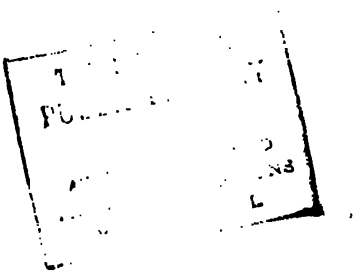
When her father came to her in the library to bid her good night, she said nothing, but took his thin frame in her strong arms.

For a moment he suffered her embrace, then put her gently aside. "You don't know," he said. "You can't know, sweetheart." He bowed his head and left her.

She went to the window and threw aside the curtains. The night was clear and soft, and a full moon rode above the trees in the square. She put out the lamp and leaned her head against one of the little rectangular panes of ancient glass. Mechanically her eyes took in what they saw—a clear white arc lamp that threw out the trees about it into prominence and cast dense shadows over a bench beneath, upon which a solitary man sat, vague image of desolation. Familiar as she was with the sight of the houseless dregs of humanity that haunt the square, it always brought a pang of almost sisterly pity. And there was something in her own sorrow, and her impending fate—which after all was not dissimilar to theirs—that now brought a particular pang.

The door opened behind her. Quickly drying her eyes, she turned and descried May in her

"A solitary man sat, vague image of desolation."



nightgown, peering into the room. "The bride —all in white!" she laughed, with half-hysterical tenderness. It was the first time the sisters had been alone together since the betrothal, and in a moment they were in each other's arms. "Are you very happy?" Judith asked, with a sympathy that was only the deeper because it had an undertone of sadness.

"Happy?" May cried. "So happy I can't sleep! I can't lie down. I want to run, to cry out—to be mad with joy!" She paused in the full flood of her exuberance to remember her sister. "You are sad, Judy dear. Why is it? I know! You are lonesome! I'm not going to leave you—never! It won't mean that you and I belong a bit less to each other! I made Billy promise that! We shall be with you every moment—two of us instead of one!"

Judith knew that her sister believed what she said with all the trusting ardor of inexperience in life. For the world she would not undeceive her. Yet all the more the knowledge of what the future held for them both intensified her own desolation. Their poverty, which little by little had separated her from her old friends, had brought her very near to May. And now that May was to be both happy and rich . . .

They heard the doorbell ring, and by and by Mrs. Boyser brought in a card. It was Wistar's.

"Say that we have gone to bed," said Judith.

"No, Boyser! Tell him we're up and will see him!" As May said this she put a firm hand over Judith's lips.

Boyser was not unused to the wilfulness of the younger sister, and she acted with the long-accustomed license of a faithful servant. "I'll give ye wan minute to skiddaddle!" she said as she departed.

"If you *could* care for him!" May exclaimed. "Ah, why is anyone so stupid as not to be in love!"

"You shouldn't have!" Judith protested. "He was *dreadful* this evening!"

"I know! Billy and I quarrel and make up. It only means that you are in love!" She fled like a phantom through a private passage that led into the back room. "Come! Sleep in my room to-night," she called back from the threshold, "and tell me all about it!"

When Wistar came in Judith was lighting the lamp.

He strode quickly to her and took the match from her hand. "I couldn't look at you—bear to have you look at me! Only let me say—my blunder this evening . . . my violent temper . . . believe me! I am suffering for it! Can you ever forgive me?"

Though she could see him only in dim outline,

she recognized that it was he who had been sitting out there in the square. But for his desolation, now so near and so appealing, she had no trace of pity.

"To forgive," she said coldly—"it is the easiest of all the virtues!"

"You mean that you can't forget—that to forget would *not* be a virtue!"

"What you have done—what you have said!—since it was all a mistake, yes, I could forgive it, and forget it! Old as my father is, and weak—such words may offend him, but they can't harm him! The only wrong was to yourself."

"Yes—yes! It was that I came to tell you! I don't hope to forgive myself!"

"Nor I, myself!"

He shook his head. "I don't know what you mean!"

"This afternoon, your friendship——"

"Friendship!" he protested, with fine scorn.

"Call it love, then! Whatever it is, I went to you, there in your own place, pleaded with you in our behalf, tried to make use of—of what you feel for me—in a matter of money!"

Again he shook his head. "I don't know what you mean!"

"By doing that—I who don't love you, can't ever love you—I gave you the right to think as you thought of us, to say what you said. Bribery

and theft, treacherous hospitality—in the way you charged, we are guiltless; but in another way, and more deeply disgraceful, *I* am guilty of them all!"

"It is not true! I have blundered—wronged you! But I honor you—love you!—and I always must! Most of all for the loyalty to your father, which made you feel what you did, for your frank trust in speaking of it to me! What I threatened this afternoon—defeat to your father, poverty to you—instead, I shall bring him success, and to you the life of use and beauty you were born to."

"You must not do that!"

"It is my right—the one right on earth I prize!"

The words brought to Judith an echo of what he had said in the afternoon—that he grudged this right to Penrhyn. "I forbid you!" she exclaimed.

"Not for your sake, but for my own! What I did this evening—I see it all now! I've thought it all out, on the bench there in the square. I supposed my motives were the best. But from the start I have been obstinate—jealous! I thought very ill of Penrhyn. The idea of what he is to you . . . He is as honorable as any man."

"You may be sure he is!" she said coldly.

"Then it is my privilege—a privilege without regret—to work with him for you!"

"I forbid you to do anything for me!"

"But for myself—with my own I can do what I will!"

"If you do, it is the end of everything between us—friendship, acquaintance even."

"Let it be the end! That is best, when to see you can only mean torture! I can leave you! Once before, in this very room, I left you! And I lived out my life without you—could have lived it till the end. My fate is happier to-day." He stood erect with the consciousness of power—power to sway her life. "In the years to come when you think of me, if you ever do, don't think of me as working in the old shop, grimy and dull as the cave man you called me, for a good you never dreamed of. I shall be out in the world—your world!—shoulder to shoulder with your father, with Penrhyn! When power comes to your father, and happiness to you—it will be I who have brought it!"

"You would force the gift on me!" she cried, her old antagonism mounting. "None the less it would be a gift! You would make me feel that I had bartered my soul!"

"I shall claim no reward. This good-by is forever! But all my life I shall be happier, because I shall be nearer to you—yes, nearer and dearer!" He paused a moment, and then reached forth his hand to bid her good night.

She shrank against the curtain, near which she had been standing, and instinctively drew her hand behind her back.

"You won't say good-by?" he asked very sadly. "You despise me still—hate me, perhaps?"

She did not answer. After a pause she shook her head.

"You are not afraid of me—afraid because I love you?"

This was no man of the common sort, swayed by the selfishness of passion. But all the more his love offended her, roused in her an instinctive repulsion—the primeval spirit of revolt, which was also the spirit of fear. "No!" she said, with such calmness as she could command. "I am not afraid of you! What should I feel for a man like you? Yes! You are right! I hate you!"

"You might have spared me that word! I've no luck! The things I don't care for—never cared for—all come to me—wealth, power, all that! They find me, and they leave me—the cave man." He paused, and was a long time silent.

Judith stood dazed in the sway of emotions she had never known before. Through her mood echoed the sound of his voice, humble and proud, impassioned and reverent, pleading and commanding. Her face was averted, but she felt the light

of his eyes upon her, encompassing her like an aura in the darkened room.

"Till to-day," he pleaded, "I had my dream of you. One shaft of sunlight shone into my dismal life! But since you . . . since you hate me, everything is dark—in the cave." His head drooped dejectedly, and slowly he turned to go. But the mood lasted only a moment. "No! Not all!" he said proudly. "You hate me. I shall not get used to that! But it is still in my power —no one can take it from me!—to live for you— yes, and to make you happy!"

He left her so quietly that she scarcely heard his tread. But presently the door closed beneath; and when, in obedience to an impulse the memory of which later brought the blood to her cheeks, she looked out at the window, she saw him walk out of the gate and up the street, resolute and erect.

CHAPTER XVIII

AS Wistar turned into Fifth Avenue, now deserted and silent beneath its gleaming rows of twin arc lights, he heard footsteps behind him. Glancing mechanically about, he saw Andrews issuing from one of the paths that lead diagonally across the eastern end of the square. He turned away with mingled pity and contempt. Presently he realized that the sound of footsteps had ceased. Turning again, he saw a shadowy form skulk into the mews that back the row of mansions on the square. At this evidence of shame in a man naturally shameless he felt a moment's surprise, and then, immersed in other thoughts, forgot the incident.

As he let himself into his rooms he pressed an electric button near the door, in obedience to a habit of long standing. In a far corner a globe of favrile glass poured forth a flood of opalescent golden light. Beneath it, standing on a pedestal of marble, was the replica of a renaissance sculpture—a young and beautiful woman, a Madonna

perhaps, the simple, serene features of which bore an expression that might have reminded one of Judith in her gentler moments. In front of it stood a carved mediæval priedieu. In the first sorrow of ten years ago he had flung himself prostrate here and poured out his heart in prayer, as if to the one creature who would understand. And ever since the sight of the little altar, with its statue and its lamp, had touched his heart to a certain piety. But to-night, as he saw it all, he felt as if a stranger, and with a quick, instinctive movement he switched on the other lights.

The whole apartment breathed an atmosphere of rich and somber beauty which had been no less a part of his life than his noisy and ill-smelling shops. Here was all the home he had. Men who are denied the warmth and loveliness of the normal human affections are apt to make good their loss, as well as they may, with the warmth and loveliness of inanimate objects—if objects may be called inanimate which supremely stir the eye and the mind. Dull crimson rugs glowed upon the floor, and the walls were hung with antique velvet, through the worn, red nap of which shone the fire of a web of gold. On all sides were low shelves filled with books, good books and rare books, variously bound in the soberer shades of Morocco and illumined with exquisite tooling.

On one wall was a large French landscape, with

a round of young girls and their lovers dancing in the twilight of a forest glade, while over all shone a far, deep evening sky in which the fading blue of daylight mingled with the faint gold radiance of stars. On another wall was a Flemish portrait of a young man whose vivid cheeks and delicately curved, vital lips were dominated by eyes in which lurked the sadness of the ages. The lists of the works of two of the world's masters have each, among the names of famous collectors, an entry which reads: "In the possession of James Wistar, Esq., New York," but Wistar's feeling for these paintings was very different from that of the connoisseur—though just what it was he himself would probably not have been able to tell. Lonesome though his life was, the room had welcomed him from his workaday existence with something like the embrace of comradeship and tried affection.

Now it all seemed to him the mere shadow of a dream that was dead, and deserved to be dead. Turning his back upon it, he threw open the window and looked out upon the roofs of the city—the gray, disordered world of human fact. He had thought that his life was devoted to her memory—and what had she cared! He had plotted so deeply and so persistently to save her—from what? From his own obstinacy! And finally he had gone to her father to deal with him in the

utmost tenderness and reverence—and had ended by wronging him brutally. He had constituted himself guardian of a noble and generous ideal, and had made himself a blundering victim of jealousy.

From the hurried and jumbled events of the day one figure stood out clear and unmistakable —the figure of Judith, not like this marble, passive and cold, but erect and defiant, supporting with her long, firm fingers the white head upon which he was heaping insult. Wistar had a strong sense of the essential humor of life, and now, at the thought of the discrepancy between the world of his imagination and the world as he had awakened to find it, he burst into a peal of robust, if bitter, laughter. "I tried to make her a Fra Angelico angel in a nightgown," he said, "and she is a woman of blood and fire. She has a brain in her bonnet, by God, a body beneath her frock; and I'll make her respect me as a man."

With rising courage, he thought the whole thing out to the finish. The finish was Mrs. Stanley Penrhyn, a leader in New York society, the mother of many children, each of whom had a dimple in his chin and alert, blue eyes. "A good finish, too," he concluded. "Penrhyn is a damn fine fellow. He's no moon calf. He knows what he wants, and he goes and gets it!"

Presently he became aware that in the back-

ground of this idyl was the figure of an aging bachelor with hungry eyes and hair grizzling at the temples, over whose lean knees the five children delighted to clamber. But he caught himself up short in this old trick of sentimentalizing, and remembered that he had bound himself not to see Judith. "As for me," he said, "Hell! *I'll* marry the typewriter." He burst into another peal of laughter, and with it his fit of profanity ended. Going to the bedroom, he began to undress, throwing his clothes about in his manner of the unlicked college cub, which had been cramped by no home influence. The Goody, as he called the chambermaid, in his undergraduate parlance, adored him, and made a joy of what others would have balked. Lighting a long drop pipe, he stretched himself out on the bed. Cooling breezes from down the bay fluttered the loose, white stuff of his pajamas. "She thinks I'm a stick-in-the-mud and a ruffian," he said out loud. "I'm not as bad as that; and even if I don't see her, I'll make her believe it." He puffed a while in silence. The longer he thought of Judith in this new mood the less he felt that he knew her. Hazily he began to wish that he might see her now and then just to make her acquaintance. By and by the pipe fell from his lips, and he was asleep.

CHAPTER XIX

THE meeting of the promoters was held early Monday afternoon in Penrhyn's offices in Wall Street. As Wistar entered he caught the pungent odor of sealing wax, and the whole place breathed the air of official formality. The clerk by the door was receipting for a fat package of registered letters, and he made Wistar wait till he had finished, and gravely passed the time of day with the express messenger. Then he took Wistar's card. When he returned, however, he led him very respectfully into an ante-room and left him standing while he carried it to Penrhyn.

Billy was already there, and when they were alone remarked on the grandeur of their surroundings. At intervals in the suite of rooms were huge, green marble columns, apparently monoliths, and topped with gilded Ionic volutes. The partitions and furniture were of mahogany, and the floor was an inch deep in the nap of a green carpet. Wistar was not unused to the sumptuousness of financial state, but Billy gave a pan-

tomime of being impressed by it, and spoke, with a twinkle in his eye, in an awed whisper.

Penrhyn left them to cool their heels some time; and when he came in and led them to a directors' room, his manner, though hospitable, was far removed from his customary joviality. Mr. Sears, however, whom they found inside, was manifestly nervous and anxious as to the outcome of the conference. Penrhyn seated himself in a huge armchair behind a vast mahogany table, leaving the others to sit about the wall. If he had calculated the effect of state, however, he had calculated it shrewdly, for just as Wistar was beginning to suspect him of lugs he proceeded to business, and with a simplicity, directness and informality that stood out in bold relief from the atmosphere with which he had surrounded himself.

"I hope it isn't necessary," he said, addressing Wistar, "to insist that Mr. Sears and I respect your economic scruples against certain forms of trade consolidations."

"That is the *sine qua non*."

"We stand ready to back you up in anything reason and your conscience demands. And in view of the magnitude of what we propose, and the complexity of the problem that confronts us, it is idle to deny that success is by no means assured, and especially if we are beset by opposition as intelligent and powerful as you would put up."

Here he paused, and added with a frank laugh: "Yesterday afternoon we thought the jig was up. I'm afraid it is anyway. But whatever happens, I want to say that it's mighty square of you to come down here for a final conference."

He outlined the scheme with a few telling strokes. It was sane and fair. The capital he placed at a conservative figure, and named a promoters' bonus, for himself and Mr. Sears, which was far from large. As leader in the underwriting syndicate, he volunteered to subscribe for a large share of stock at a fair price; and in order to facilitate the general sale to the public he promised not to throw any of his holdings upon the market for two years. In return for these considerations, he stipulated that he be assured the office of treasurer.

This surprised Wistar, but pleased him no less. When promoter and underwriter make a quick profit and clear out it looks bad for the industry, bad for the investing public. Wistar wanted no better guarantee of Penrhyn's belief in the scheme than that he was willing to stick by it for better or for worse. "I not only promise all that," he said, "but with your permission I insist upon it."

Penrhyn nodded. "At the request of your former allies, you say, you have made a statement of the value of your business. We will give

you the full amount in preferred stock, bearing cumulative seven per cent dividends." He then named Wistar's bonus of common stock, and it was liberal. "In order that you may be sure of making that stock as sound as may be, we guarantee you the presidency and practical control of the combination for two years. We would say longer, only we fear that that would rouse the jealousy of other manufacturers; and as the best practical substitute, Mr. Sears and I stand ready, and hereby promise, to use all our influence to reelect you as often as you desire."

Wistar took out a pencil and went through a brief calculation. "The terms," he concluded, "are liberal in the extreme."

Penrhyn smiled. "I know that, and I should be the last man to offer them if I were not obliged to. I don't suppose you are aware of the fact, but no bluff on earth could have insured such terms as your honest doubts and scruples."

"That *has* occurred to me," Wistar said. "Honesty is the best policy—when a man is his own insurance company."

Penrhyn laughed in a way to make Wistar feel, for the first time in his life, that he was a wit—a fact that made him begin to suspect flattery. But in the nick of time Penrhyn went on, naming Sears as vice-president and fixing his salary at a figure which, though not excessive, meant com-

fort, even a moderate degree of luxury, to his household.

Wistar nodded acquiescence. He then stipulated that they should do the fair thing by his allies of the antisyndicate. Penrhyn readily agreed.

All this had passed in less than ten minutes. Then Penrhyn looked at Billy very gravely. "There is one subject," he said, "upon which every executive committee ought to have the services of an expert always at hand, and with this in view we hope to prevail upon Mr. Onderdonk to accept a position upon ours."

Billy blushed, conscious of an ignorance of all things, and asked what the subject was.

Penrhyn paused portentously, and then said: "Paint rooms."

The executive committee was to have five members, and with Billy on it Wistar's position would be greatly strengthened. As long as either Mr. Sears or Penrhyn stood with him, he would control the entire corporation. It increased Wistar's confidence in Penrhyn that he passed over this feature of his plan so lightly.

When Penrhyn was about to call a stenographer, however, to make a duplicate note of their agreement, Wistar stayed him. "The worst," he said, "is yet to come—Minot. His ideas are large, but I think not exorbitant. Certainly they

won't grow smaller with success. I propose to ask him to join us at the outset. All the conditions of the game require that a dangerous outsider shall be won over. If he demands a place on the executive committee, there is a place left, and I think we ought to give it to him."

With the air of one willing to be convinced, Penrhyn asked for figures. Wistar named a sum that was large even in comparison with the sums in which they had been dealing.

"Is his device sufficiently basic to be protected by patent?"

"Patent law is most uncertain. But if he had our backing no one would dare to make the fight. On the other hand, if we leave Minot on the outside, we shall be his rivals, and rivalry will increase his obstinacy. That would be most embarrassing for me, for I am interested in both concerns."

Penrhyn shook his head. "I don't doubt your sincerity, or the justice of the price you name. But in acquiring properties the value of which has already been demonstrated our resources will be sufficiently extended. To buy in Minot in addition would just about wipe out the profits of the promoters, and in fairness to Mr. Sears I don't think we ought to do that—to say nothing of myself. There is one other way—to increase the capital stock; but that would create financial difficulties, first in placing the stock with the pub-

lic, second in paying dividends, and third in accumulating a surplus against possible, even probable, hard times."

The argument was astute and telling, for Wistar himself had vigorously urged the necessity of protecting the public of investors against loss, and the industry against being sacrificed to the necessity of stock manipulation. That Penrhyn had any ulterior motive for not wanting Minot on the executive committee Wistar did not for a moment suspect—his whole plan had seemed liberal and aboveboard; but he protested none the less firmly.

"Of two evils," Wistar protested, "the one I proposed is the less. To take Minot in now, even at so advanced a figure, would in the end prove an economy."

"That may be," Penrhyn conceded, "but to do so would look to the financial world very much like speculation. And it might even have a worse appearance, in view of the fact that you are so heavily interested with Minot. Both the underwriters and the investing public would be certain to take a sinister view of it."

At this Wistar instinctively bridled. But he was learning to fear his instincts; and while he hesitated—he who had hitherto always known his own mind and spoken it—Penrhyn was forging ahead.

"What do you think, Mr. Sears?" he said.

"I would go far to satisfy Mr. Wistar. We owe a great deal to the courtesy with which he has yielded to our representations."

"But on the abstract merits of the case?"

"It has the disadvantages you mention."

Penrhyn turned to Billy.

"If we are to intrust the management of the whole concern to Wistar," the boy said, "I don't see why we should doubt his judgment now."

"But the question is financial rather than industrial."

"Does the financial point fall within my bailiwick?" Billy asked. Then he blushed furiously, remembering what that bailiwick was.

Penrhyn laughed aloud, though with a trace of harshness which made Wistar feel for the first time that beneath his outward manner was a strain of excitement and suspense.

There was a pause. Penrhyn looked to Wistar.

"Billy has hit the nail on the head," Wistar said slowly. "In a corporation such a matter can be decided only by general agreement."

Again Penrhyn paused. Wistar scrutinized his countenance for any let-down in his formal ease and calm, but it broke into a smile of friendly embarrassment. "Mr. Sears and I are both against the proposal," he said, "and Onderdonk is on the fence."

In spite of Penrhyn's fairness—perhaps because

of it, for it was somewhat too genial, too polished —Wistar now felt that the man had motives which he kept darkly hidden. They were obviously related to this matter of Minot; but how, he was at a loss to guess. Of his own position, with Billy and Mr. Sears on the executive committee, he felt secure. It was possible that Penrhyn was planning, after he was once inside, to oust him, when the pinch came, from control. But to do that he would have to win over a majority of the board of directors, which would require a majority of the stockholders. And the power to do this meant the power to oust Minot also—and Wistar could not see that he had such power. Yet he doubted. His lifelong habit of independence revolted. His judgment was not his own. His conscience was not his own. What was he, the merchant, the trust-buster, doing in this galley of finance?

He was about to break off the negotiations when he became aware that Mr. Sears was gazing at him, hope and despair battling in his sensitive countenance. He remembered their last meeting, and how suspicions a thousand times better grounded had betrayed him; of Judith, and the wrong he had done her; of the resolutions of his awakening.

"Very well, then," he said. "Leave Minot on the outside. I bow to the will of the majority."

CHAPTER XX

WHEN the meeting broke up, Billy went conscientiously back to his foreman in the machine room; but Wistar, for the first time in his life, felt the lack of a definite interest. There were many things to do at the garage, but the place reminded him too painfully of Judith, and the break he had made in the tenor of his existence. His presence was needed at the factory but he had somehow lost interest in it. The new company for Minot had still to be put in shape; but this appealed to him least of all. The work of his lifetime, upon which he had spent infinite pains, was, or soon would be, no longer his. He himself was a mere cog in a vast mechanism. He was lonesome in a way in which he had never been lonesome before, and for the first time in his memory he went to his club in the afternoon.

At the door he met a member who was setting out with much belabeled hand luggage for vacation. He thought forlornly of how long it was since he had had a vacation, and even more forlornly of how bored he would be if he took one.

Within the club brooded the drowsiness of midsummer. The main room, looking on Fifth Avenue, was empty, except for a man who sat in a window sipping a long drink and gazing listlessly into the street where, in the place of the winter's stream of smart carriages and motor cars, there was only an occasional hack, or a rubber-neck wagon with its cargo of sweltering tourists. The liveried servants were idle and bored.

Wistar sat down by the center table and opened an evening paper. It was the first edition, and was made up of a rehash of the morning's news, eked out with items in small type clipped from exchanges. He took an elevator for the library, but though there were some twenty thousand volumes there, he could not find one he cared to read. Even the placards of SILENCE! distributed on the center tables, which had once greeted him like a benediction after a day in his machine shops, seemed an ironic superfluity. He lay back in his chair and gazed up at the vaulted ceiling. It was decorated with a skillful copy of one of the masterpieces of Italian mural painting, but it bored him. Then he went to the barber shop and had his hair cut, and afterwards to the tank for a cool plunge, but it was still three hours to dinner, and six hours to the earliest bedtime.

His eye fell upon a telephone booth. There were a score of men with whom he had sometimes

sat down for dinner, but not one who would fit into his present mood. He took up the telephone book. In all these hundreds of thousands, he asked himself, was there a single human being upon whom he could rely for companionship, to say nothing of sympathy? After serious consideration he decided that there was just one. He went inside and, calling up the garage, asked for Billy. Would Billy dine with him? Billy generally dined with the Searses. If Billy were given the rest of the afternoon off, could he manage for this once? If Wistar really wanted him he would try. Wistar remarked that Billy's engagement deserved a little dinner of cousinly congratulation. Billy asked, rather dubiously, if *that* was what he wanted—meaning, if that was all. Wistar protested, and truthfully, that it was not all. He added that he wanted to talk business; but that was a lie; he hated business; he loathed business. Billy said he would do his best.

An hour later a club servant called him to the telephone. He recognized the voice of May. It was horrid of Mr. Wistar to take Billy away when they all had so much to celebrate. Wouldn't he come, too, and dine with the family? They would *all* talk business. Wistar floundered a while, remembering only too well his covenant with Judith.

"Is it because it's little sister *me* that asks you, and not Judith?" May pointedly inquired.

She was more nearly right than she knew, but he protested. His protest was feeble, however.

"If Judy asks you, then will you come!" May demanded.

Inwardly ironic, Wistar allowed that in that case he could not reasonably refuse.

"Then make up your mind to be a victim!" May concluded, and hung up the receiver with a snap.

Before long, however, Billy telephoned that he would come uptown for dinner; and at the appointed hour he was on hand at the Harvard Club, one of the few clubs in the metropolis in which it is possible to introduce nonmembers—for Billy was too recently graduated to have clubs of his own.

The sight of him filled Wistar with sardonic glee. "I rather hoped," he said, quite shamelessly, "that I was to be invited down to Washington Square."

Billy hesitated a moment. "May wanted to ask you, and Mr. Sears. But Judith proposed that the family have their first little celebration alone. It means a whole lot to them, you know."

Judith's escape had been adroit, but no less delicate and fine. For a moment Wistar's old tenderness revived. With it came a pang—in his lungs, or somewhere near them. "Was Penrhyn there?" he asked.

"He proposed a blow-out uptown here and spoke of asking you, but Judith wouldn't have it, and he made his skidoo, along with me."

Wistar laughed inwardly. His thrust had been a close one, all unpremeditated as it was; but her parry had been as sportsmanlike as effective. He had never before chaffed her, and he felt a little thrill worth many afternoons of ennui.

Early in the dinner the waiter brought wine in its bucket of ice. They touched their glasses, and Wistar said a few words that made Billy flush with pleasure, and unsealed the confidences of his bosom. The contrast with his own lonesome state made Wistar's eyes swim with an emotion which he had difficulty in dissembling. No man was farther than he from the weakness of self-pity; but few were more sensitive to the poignant beauty of simple happiness.

With the second bottle, however, Billy broke the spell. "I must say," he remarked, looking about at the room, "that you bachelors in New York do yourselves particularly well."

It was, in fact, an apartment of notable beauty, in the manner of a baronial dining hall. The floor, walls and two great fireplaces were of soft, gray Yorkshire stone, and on the high oak wainscot hung portraits of the dignitaries of the university, past and present. The lofty ceiling was upheld by oak beams, and from it hung two silver

chandeliers of exquisite design—the one touch of lightness and grace in all the vast and sober apartment.

"I don't think this sort of thing ought to be allowed," Billy concluded. "It's a discourager of domesticity."

Wistar felt the touch of condescending pity. "You are right," he assented. "It is the reason why I have never married. 'Two souls with but a single thought' is alliterative; but it's not my idea of the intellectual life. 'Two hearts that beat as one' suggests an admirable cardiac economy, but a certain meagerness in the life of the emotions. Now you and May, I suppose, are going to live in a flat?"

"She has already picked it out," Billy confessed dubiously.

"Precisely! No clubs for you! Dinner at seven-thirty three hundred and sixty-five days in the year, and even in leap year you have to follow the ball, keep your eyes in the boat. Then there are the consequences. Unless I miss my guess, you are destined to be a disciple and pride to the President. When the second child is born, they say, the nose of the first is broken; but the nose of the husband is broken with the first. And do you think that even then you'll be allowed to go to the club? Not on your life! You for the single thought and single heart! As a willing

martyr, I admire you. But I commiserate you as a man."

Billy was silent, and drank two glasses of wine in rapid succession.

"Some men have the idea that it's a fix they got themselves into, and if they are sportsmen they play the game. But unless I'm mistaken, you never asked anyone to marry you? Still you'll have to play the game. Let us be honest! Isn't it a case for cold feet?"

Billy became very dignified, but none the less thoughtful. "When I wake up at night, and in the early morning," he admitted, "it sometimes seems like a great responsibility. But after my bath it's all right. No! I don't regret it!"

Wistar burst into a peal of laughter. "Bravo!" he cried. "The man doesn't live who is a hero before his bath. Billy, you're *all* right!"

When Billy realized that he had been horsed, it put him, as he would have expressed it, very much on the peeve.

"Don't mind me," Wistar made haste to apologize. "The girl I wanted wouldn't have me. Even clubs, and all this sort of thing — hasn't quite consoled me. And now that I've told you the story of my life, you deserve another bottle."

Billy made protest.

"It won't hurt you," Wistar pleaded. "It's

of the magic vintage of eighty-nine—all joy and no kick."

Over coffee and cigars Billy gave the effect of rising up in his chair, for the cup of joy soon fills to the brim. The cup of sorrow has no bottom, and Wistar sat back at his ease.

"Now for a ride!" he said, when the tray was filled with ashes.

His car was at the door, and taking the wheel he dismissed the chauffeur. As they swung into Fifth Avenue, only a few stray cabs were at the stands by Delmonico's and Sherry's. The thoroughfare itself was deserted, except for here and there the caretaker of a mansion closed for the summer, taking the evening in shirt sleeves in the front area.

Almost before Billy realized it they were in the country, with the smooth white State road stretching in front, and a world of green flashing by them in the brilliant field of the acetylenes. The exhilaration of speed swelled with that of iced wine. When they took the homeward turn, Wistar advanced the throttle.

"Aren't we going pretty fast?" Billy asked. He had always looked upon his cousin as a bit of a slow coach. Wistar was in fact a model motorist; he never exceeded the speed limit—except when there was no possible danger to others, or chance of being arrested.

Wistar's answer was to slide the throttle knob still farther in its ratchet. "Now," he said, spitting his words into the hurricane they were cleaving, "now we'll only touch the high places!"

Billy grasped the sides of his seat. Was it possible that the self-contained Wistar was losing his head? He thanked his stars that the car held true and firm to the middle of the way and that they were alone in the midnight road.

"With just a little more gas," Wistar remarked very gravely, by and by, "we shan't even touch the high places! From the top of that hill ahead I can do a Santos Dumont and land you, neat and clean, in front of the club. What do you say?"

Billy's terror mounted, and he felt as if the car were already soaring into the heavens. "For heaven sake!" he cried, and grasped his cousin's forearm, "I'll get out and walk home. I need the exercise."

As they bowled up to the top of the hill, Wistar slowed down, and they saw the lights of the city reflected on the sky in front. When Billy realized that they were still on terra firma, he breathed a great sigh and relaxed in his seat.

It was toward one o'clock when they drew up again at the club, and Wistar's man was waiting

to take the car. Inside a light supper was awaiting them, and another bottle in its melting ice. Billy drank gingerly, but Wistar stood by to the finish still lax and grave.

At one o'clock the lights in the club went out, except those where they were sitting, and the steward respectfully informed Wistar that if he stayed on he would be fined.

"Fine away," said Wistar. But he emptied the bottle and rose from the table.

He stopped, however, at the bar and asked the barkeeper for calisaya. "My friend here," he said, "may need it in the morning." He pocketed the package, and linking arms with Billy crossed the street to his apartments.

Again, in obedience to long habit, he switched on the light in the golden globe above his little altar. But he immediately turned on the other lights.

Billy blinked. "I like dim religious business," he protested, and turned them off.

Wistar glowered at the corner, but acquiesced, and with meticulous hospitality, made ready a bed for Billy, even producing slippers and gown for the morning. Then he showed him his little ice chest, and the calisaya and siphons inside. "If you feel thirsty," he said, "call me and we'll have another drink."

"I've been in several tank dramas," Billy re-

marked in admiration, as he walked out of his trousers, "but this is the most 'stonishing! You're sober as a magistrate a Monday morning."

Wistar had indeed been a model of self-control, if not of sobriety; but with this his voice broke loose and rose to a calliope yell. "Me sober! I'm tight as a tire!" He glared luminously about the room, his glance floating at last to the golden globe. With sudden energy he strode to the corner, and lifted the marble Madonna upon his shoulder. Balancing it there, he swung about with the motion of a shot putter, and with gigantic energy hurled it aloft. It struck the globe squarely, shattered it and exploded the cluster of electric bulbs within. Falling on its former pedestal, it scattered in fragments upon the floor, amid a shower of splintered glass and the rattling of windows.

Billy sat bolt upright in his bed, and peered in amazement out into the blank midnight of the study.

"Don't be 'larmed!" Wistar reassured him. "Damn things never were any good anyway. Ought to have done that ten years ago!"

The shock revived Billy's memory. "We haven't said a word 'bout business!" he protested. "Business dinner. Muss talk business!"

"Business!" Wistar cried. "Business you say? I've done the best turn of my life! Yesterday I was trust-buster. Now I'm trusted. That's not

just way to language it, but you know what I mean! And I—I know what I mean, bet your life. You watch me to-morrow!"

He went to bed, crooning gladly, "Trust-buster trusted! Trust-buster trusted!"

CHAPTER XXI

WISTAR'S position as executive head of the combination made a radical change in his daily life. It was no longer possible to give any considerable portion of his time to his old business, and his first duty was to appoint a manager in his place. He selected the head of a department, doubled his salary and promised him a block of stock in the combination. The experiment seemed to him hazardous; but it speedily justified itself. Things went on quite as well as before. There is a saying that good men are scarce, and it had been a favorite of Wistar's; but he now woke up to the inconsistency of proverbial wisdom, recalling the equally approved adage that no man is indispensable.

The awakening struck harshly across all his old habits of mind; but it had this advantage, that it chimed in with his new mood with regard to Judith. What he had been all these years meant as little to the work as to her. He accepted both conclusions with the sardonic self-satire that was fast becoming habitual.

He made a special point of visiting personally the many small manufacturers who had not belonged either to Penrhyn's faction or his own, for it was upon these, he believed, that the chief hardship of the new order would fall. He promised himself that he would make a place for every good man he found; and there was more than altruism in this, for he was well aware that the future of any great combination must be founded upon men of ideas and of individuality of character.

One of the weaker sisters, as he soon came to call them, was a man of Dutch ancestry, who had fixed upon his model three years before, on embarking in the business, and in all the extraordinary development of the motor car had never seen fit to change it. He made a boast of the fact, and seemed actually to regard it as an achievement. What is more, he did a fair business with men of his own stripe.

Another was an inventive genius who had varied the standard type of almost every part, and was the proud possessor of as many patents as there are varieties of pickles—and all this before he had put a single model on the market. When Wistar went out with him in his demonstration car, the newly patented ignition gave out on the gangway leading out of the garage; and in the middle of Central Park his carburetor sulked, like

Achilles in his tent, and refused to be persuaded. Wistar put a few questions as to his financial resources, and found that he was in high hopes of finding enough capital in the near future to pay his last year's bills. Then he bade him a good-natured adieu, and took the Fifth Avenue stage with a warm admiration for its simple reliability.

Still another man was turning out numbers of runabouts which were built, as he frankly explained, on the principle of the one-dollar watch —the best thing to be had for the money. Wistar pointed out that with such cheap and ill-finished materials there was bound to be an infinite need of repairs. The man smiled cannily and said with pride that the profits of his repair shops more than equaled those of the original sales.

As the result of a month of hard labor, which included thousands of miles of travel, from old-world Bridgeport to newly arisen San Francisco, Wistar was convinced that nothing is commoner in life than individuality and ideas; but he had not found one man or one idea worth securing for the combination.

With heightened curiosity he turned his attention to the concerns that had gathered under Penrhyn. Many of them, he knew, were strong and able; but about many more he had his suspicions, for his ideas of trust promotions were founded upon the practice of half a dozen years before,

when Colonial blacksmith shops and the latest developments of Pittsburg brains were rolled into a conglomerate mass and sold in shares of common and preferred. To his amazement he found scarcely an instance in which, to use the vernacular, Penrhyn had been stung. When he brought his own former allies under scrutiny, he was obliged to admit that, though assembled by a committee of coöperative experts, they contained a considerably larger proportion of dead wood.

Then Wistar did some hard thinking. The sense of commercial values, he concluded, is a thing quite apart from the technical knowledge of commodities. Penrhyn scarcely knew a clutch from a carburetor, but he knew a good man and a sound plant by telepathy—or at best by the same sense that is making the sons of Abraham financiers of everything, though producers of nothing. The fact that Penrhyn had let Minot slip through his aptly meshed net Wistar now felt inclined to put down to the fact that he was only a Yankee. At the end of six months the late trust-buster had gained no little respect for high finance.

Wistar's next problem, to which in fact he had given a part of his time from the outset, was to build up the various concerns into an organic unit. His plan was to confine each to the production of a distinct type of car, the whole to include every

variety for which there was a market. Where several factories had produced each a small number of cars of similar model, one now produced a large number of the same model. A number of factories he shut down at once, transferring the men and managers, as far as possible, to other shops. With regard to Irvingdale Smith, his temptation was to wipe out the nefarious concern. But to his surprise he found that it was well organized and profitable. He ended by making essentially, what it had been superficially, a duplicate of his own. The plant operated in a widely different section, and by doing this he gained local good will and a considerable sum in freights.

Here as elsewhere, as far as practicable, he made each part, from cylinder to screw, of standard size, pattern and finish. The result was a vast convenience to the motoring public in repairs and at the same time a vast advantage in the manufacture. A single shop, giving regular and full employment to expert specialists, was able to do the work that had hitherto been done at irregular intervals by general workmen; and the gain was as great in quality of output as it was in cheapness.

In facility and economy of sales the result of combination was a notable saving. With fewer models to sell there was need of fewer agencies and agents, fewer advertisements in newspapers and

periodicals. The only competition was with single and unimportant makers, and could be more cheaply and successfully met by maintaining a reputation for excellence than by the aid of the eloquence of the writer of advertisements or the volubility of the agent. Before the year had passed Wistar was convinced that with all these savings it would be possible to scale down prices a good thirty per cent and still gain enormous profits; and he made a special point of gathering minute data with a view to recommending this.

The final advantage of combination, the power to regulate prices, he was slower to realize, for it was closely allied to the abuses he had so long abhorred—the extortion of undue profits; yet as time went on he saw it clearly and more clearly. With competition reduced to the minimum, and dealing in large quantities, it was possible to avoid irrational fluctuations both in buying raw materials and selling the finished product. In times of prosperity, he foresaw, it would be less easy for the makers of iron and steel to exact from him unfair terms; and when a business depression cut off the demand for motor cars there was less likelihood that the market would be ruined by a desperate cutting of prices. He had accepted the old order of competition as one of the incidents of life—as earthquakes, fire and flood are incidents of the general life of man. But he gradually,

and in part unconsciously, slipped into Judith's opinion that, economic sincerity being granted, it was as needless as it was wasteful of the blessings of civilization.

In fact many of the prophecies of the promoters, which he had laughed at only a few months ago, now seemed to him possibilities, even probabilities. Already he had reduced the cost of manufacture of the various parts so low that it was possible to put a skillfully designed and finished one-cylinder car on the market at a price within the means of commuters of average means. In thinking of the model he sometimes called it his Straphangers' Scorcher, and sometimes, in memory of his friend the independent, his One-dollar Wonder. But whatever he called it he saw that it would bring ease and health to thousands. In the end, it might even counteract the present unwholesome tendency toward the congestion of life in the cities, making the metropolis the arena of mere business, and putting it within the power of the million to live in the country, motoring in and out daily. Thus the classes most bitterly opposed to trusts might in the end be the chief gainers—not in dollars, perhaps, but in wholesome living, which is the end of all wealth.

He was no less active in behalf of cars of more expensive design. The news of the American combination had hardly been made public when

it became known that the leading European manufacturers were effecting a not dissimilar organization, and it soon became evident that they were planning to take a stronger hold upon the American market. For, backward as we had been in the manufacture of motor cars, our abundant wealth and delight in novelty had made us the chief of the world's consumers of this as of other commodities. As yet they had a vast advantage. The industry had had its origin abroad, and had reached its highest development there. The ablest inventors were on the Continent, and better workmanship was to be had for smaller wages. Moreover, the public had long been accustomed to accept the Continental car as best; and though the tariff gave an advantage to the home product, the buyers of first-class cars were not inclined to consider a few thousand dollars in the original cost as against possessing the best the market afforded. The next few years would see a struggle to the death for dominance. Wistar proceeded slowly, but gained point by point. In a very few years, he calculated, it would be possible to equal the best Continental cars in all respects, and to transfer the fight to their home markets.

And the destiny of the American motor lay in his hands. The idea of power had never appealed to him very strongly; but the possession of it, and most of all his new visions of its possibilities for

good, took firm hold upon his imagination. It seemed to be his fate to be mocked by the very phrases he had scoffed at that day in his garage. He, James Wistar, might yet be a "factor in world politics." He had never regretted the destruction of his altar to the Judith of his memory, even in the dawn of the morning after, with its combination of sweltering heat and thirst. There were times when he would have been glad of a chance to let the future Mrs. Stanley Penrhyn know that he was a different man from the late James Wistar, and that it was she who had made him so.

Even while he felt himself rising to his new responsibility, however, he questioned whether it was right for any private citizen to have as great a fortune as was coming to him, or to play so large a part in the lives of his fellow-countrymen. It was all against his American instinct of equality. And these misgivings were greater because his old distrust of his associates would not down.

On the very day after he had thrown in his lot with the combination, Irvingdale Smith had called again, and had sounded him as to precisely the matter contained in the stolen list. He appeared, as always, the cheerful pirate he was; but his manner was not that of a man who had gained inside information, and least of all of a man who was dissimulating the fact that he had done so. Incidentally he had sent in his card. It was a busi-

ness card, not a social card, and it differed in size, shape and lettering from the one Wistar had taken from Andrews. The whole case against Irvingdale Smith, to his mind, fell to the ground.

Wistar's good opinion of Penrhyn, meanwhile, was the result not so much of instinct and judgment as of what philosophers call the will to believe. Occupied with the business end of the new corporation he had had little time for the politics that centered in the election of directors, and with Billy and Mr. Sears to back him up he had no fear that the authority which had been promised him would be called in question. When it was too late to make protest he found that the place on the committee which he would have given to Minot had been given to Irvingdale Smith. Though a stronger man than Wistar had supposed, Smith scarcely deserved so important a post; and in view of their past relations, to give it to him was at best discourteous, especially as the decision had lain easily within Penrhyn's power. As matters stood, Penrhyn and Smith had only to win over Mr. Sears in order to outvote him on any point involving his policy as practical manager; and the more powerful he made the combination the greater would be their temptation to bend its power to evil ends.

Before long his signal vigor and success as manager of the industry, contrasting as it did with

his former well-known hostility to big trade combinations, had made him in a manner a public character. One of the daily papers, the attitude of which was that of a satirical, if good-humored, man of the prosperous world, printed a leading article about him, calling him, by name, the star pupil of the experience school, and displaying his views before and after. This was in the midsummer silly season, with a Presidential campaign in the near future in which the trusts were to be a leading issue; and the paper pursued the subject from day to day, humorously exaggerating its importance, and luring subscribers to write letters expressing their minds about Wistar, in terms satirically gay.

The incident did not lessen his sense of the gravity of his predicament; but it nourished his sense of humor with regard to himself, and he came to see that life is a comedy or a tragedy according as one maintains or loses his good sense and the courage to laugh at fate.

In the autumn, early in the second year of his control, came an incident which put a new edge upon his doubts. Happening in at the Harvard Club one evening for dinner, he ran upon Pedey Ryan, the old quarterback, Rough Rider and soldier of fortune, whom he had encountered in the Stadium, Class Day, and whom he had not thought of since. The little man's face was tanned to

leather, his cheeks were sunken, and the gaunt bones beneath were a living picture of an Irish potato famine. He was drinking pony after pony of brandy. The two fell upon each other's necks like long-lost brothers—as they would have done if they had met at the age of seventy, on the brink of the grave, though they had not thought of each other since the old gridiron days.

Ryan, Wistar gathered in the course of friendly questioning, had been in South America. Ever since his Rough Rider days he had had a hankering for Dago countries. Hence his fever-ridden state; and hence also, Wistar surmised, his thirst. He had been all over the shop—up the Amazon to the place where the natives shoot poisoned arrows at you with blow guns, and the vampire is not a metaphor but a bat. He had had dealings with various Dago republics, too. He had led one revolution to a successful issue and crushed another—casualties: one Indian killed, three negroes wounded, one Spaniard scared to death, and a bullet through his own Irish neck. What was it all about? Ryan hesitated, and then said, "Rubber." Wistar took this as a vernacular rebuke to his friendly curiosity, and dropped the subject in favor of dinner.

It was some days before an alternative explanation offered itself. Of all the parts of a motor car, the tires are the only one in which it is even

faintly possible to secure a monopoly of the raw material, and the tires are as vital a part of the whole as the engine itself. The lands where rubber is grown are comparatively few, and are not beyond the resources of modern finance. To bring a new grove to the bearing requires eighteen years. The motor-car industry of the whole world might be at the power of the syndicate that monopolized the existing rubber forests. All that was needful was to negotiate the purchase of lands—often merely to gain concessions by squaring republics.

Then there flashed upon him the memory of an incident so trivial that, though his eye had registered it with its usual clearness and vividness, it had never before impinged upon his mind. In the Stadium, Class Day, Ryan had nodded to Penrhyn and offered a glad hand—which had been received furtively and with a trace of hesitation. It was a nebulous hypothesis, but it accounted for all that had hitherto been dark.

CHAPTER XXII

MINOT'S new prosperity had taken the form of a little house off Madison Avenue, which he had converted into a graceful and comfortable English basement. Wistar, who had advised him in this, had early formed the habit of going there for Sunday breakfast. This was ostensibly to talk business—the organization and management of the company formed to exploit the new gear; but in reality it was quite as much for the little unwonted glimpses it gave him of homely comfort and happiness. To the unwilling bachelor there is no time as trying as the day of rest, with its enforced slump from the rush and excitement of the week. Anything was welcome which would make him forget the emptiness and dreariness of his life. And he soon formed a sincere regard for the Minots, while their daughter, a child of nine, shamelessly adored him. Besides, he sometimes caught a glimpse of Judith there.

Judith's interest in the family was in fact keen and kindly. Mrs. Minot was a pale, shrinking little woman, the record of whose twenty years of privation was evident in hair prematurely white and an ominous cough. But these, as Judith soon found, were only the outward signs of a deeper and more vital deterioration. In the past she had thought of her friend as a gentlewoman forced by fate into alien surroundings. Now, to her surprise, she found her ill at ease in returning to the life to which she had been born. Persistent misfortune had left her the victim of superstitious whims. Though she hated the sewing which had once been her bulwark against starvation, Judith found that she worked at it diligently, keeping her finger tips still rough and callous—as one knocks wood and cries *unberufen* to propitiate the imps of malevolent fortune. This amused Judith, even while it touched her; but a subsequent discovery shocked and distressed her. To cure the incipient consumption nothing more was needed than a year in the Adirondacks, but to this Mrs. Minot refused to consent—not so much, Judith found, from unwillingness to leave her husband and child, as out of an instinctive fear that if she presumed upon their marvelous new prosperity it would take wings. Once she let Judith persuade her to come to dinner, but when she found that there were to be other guests she did not come.

Her greatest happiness was in helping her old neighbors of the slums, and even this, Judith suspected, was more than half a rite of propitiation.

Despairing of the mother, Judith turned her attention to the daughter, Gertrude, a wiry, intense child who had rubbed off something of the manner and accent of her former playmates of an East Side public school. To provide her with new companions and prepare her for the ampler life that was now possible, Judith proposed to place her in a fashionable school, and to this end it was necessary to correct her minor faults of manner, for fear of ridicule from her new schoolmates. But Mrs. Minot would not hear of a governess. Even for her child she feared to claim the luxuries which life denied to so many.

The experience gave Judith her first real sense of the blight of poverty. She had often felt that the food she ate, the very stuff of the gowns she wore and the paper of the books she read, were won out of the toil of human bodies. But she now realized how much more deeply than this the many pay for the well-being of the few. Time and again she thought with a little shiver what might have come to herself if fate had done her the turn it once so dangerously threatened. Even when women succeeded in business, she realized, they were liable to lose much of their birthright of grace and delicacy. And if she had failed,

would she not have been cramped in mind and spirit, as in her outward life?

Such misgivings took an acutely personal turn whenever she came upon Wistar in the little house. His manner was casual almost to the point of indifference, but she was none the less conscious that it was tinctured with irony. She could not, of course, be aware that the irony was directed mainly against himself, and it provoked her old resentment of him. This was no superficial mood. Her father's prosperity had made her mistress again of her own little fortune, but she refused to indulge herself in the many small luxuries dear to the feminine heart, for they would somehow have seemed to her to have come from Wistar. And the realization that in this she was acting somewhat in the manner of Mrs. Minot did not shake her resolve.

Wistar's misgivings as to the ultimate wisdom of what he had done had, in fact, been powerfully reënforced by the encounter with Ryan, and now they received a further impulse. Minot's gear had already turned out all that either of them had hoped. The ease and accuracy of its control made it everywhere a convenience, and in the crowded traffic of the city streets almost indispensable. Wistar was eager to secure it for the cars of the combination. Penrhyn, however, remained strangely unconvinced of its value, and as Wistar

had predicted, Minot's ideas as to price had grown with success. There seemed likely to be a deadlock between them, ending in bitter rivalry. To facilitate an agreement, and somewhat also in order to sound the depths of Penrhyn's purposes, Wistar offered to sacrifice all his profits in the Minot company.

To this Penrhyn at first appeared to consent; but when, as Wistar had foreseen, Minot demanded a position on the executive committee, and the assurance of being able to carry out his ideas without let or hindrance, Penrhyn would not hear of it; an executive office, he argued, even a directorship, was elective, and could not be promised to any man. When Wistar objected that they themselves controlled sufficient stock to insure Minot his place, Penrhyn rejoined that to admit him they would have to depose a valuable man—Irvingdale Smith. Wistar counted on Mr. Sears's good sense to prevail; but when the motion was put formally it was lost.

Wistar was angry through and through, and no less suspicious than angry. But he controlled himself to the extent of advising Minot to waive the point. All one Sunday morning he labored in persuasion. The inventor remained obstinate. First and last his answer was the same. Penrhyn and Sears had promised to give Wistar practical control of such matters, and on this, the first im-

portant issue, they had overruled him. For Minot to trust to their good faith was to put his head in the lion's mouth. In spite of Wistar's growing enthusiasm for the combination, he could not deny the justice of the objection. He ended the conference with deep foreboding.

At the front door he found Gertrude waylaying him. Denied her customary clamber on his knee, she begged him to stay to dinner. "You haven't heard my lesson," she pleaded. "If you'll only stay, I promise to say it *poifickly*!"

"How will you say it?"

"O *Gehrtie*, come out on the *cuhrb* and see the *bihrd* fly over the *chuhrch*! There!"

He sat down on the bottom stair, hat in hand, and with the able-bodied Gertrude on his knee. "But you say it *perfectly*," he protested, "not *poifickly*."

Gertrude hid her girlish blushes in his lean, tanned cheek and hugged him with all her might.

His ear was caught by the whisper of silken skirts behind him.

"I hope I'm not intruding," Judith laughed. She had stopped in to see Mrs. Minot on her way home from church and had counted on getting away without meeting Wistar; but finding that he also had divined the needs of Gertrude and was sharing her labors she was tempted to pause. "You say it *pehr-rfectly*," she said, mocking the

Western *r* which his long residence in the East had not quite silenced. "Some people say it *peh-fectly*—O *Gehtie*, come out on the *cuhb* and see the *bihd* fly *oveh* the *chuhch*!"

The child eyed the woman with something very like jealousy—she had an odd little face, the face of one destined to adore, with high cheek bones, a large, well-formed, sensitive mouth and big brown eyes. "*I* say it p*er-r-r*-fectly!" she cried.

Wistar laughed, and, putting her down, went to the door to open it for Judith.

"Now he'll go and go with you," Gerty protested. "And I was trying so hard to make him stay to dinner!"

The remark raised a question which Wistar would have avoided. Gerty had protested too much. "If I *may* go with you," he felt obliged to say.

Judith paused, no less constrained. "If you wish," she answered.

"I think you're *horrid*, Aunty Judith," the child pouted. "You make everybody love you, and you won't love anybody!" This was her version of a scrap of conversation picked up from incautious elders. "If you don't intend to love him, you've no *business* to make him love you!"

Judith blushed, and Wistar laughed. "She can't make *me* love her!" he exclaimed; and taking Gerty in his arms kissed her good-by.

"*I* love you! Whether you love me or not, I love you!"

"And I should adore you, even if you hated me," he answered, as he passed into the street. "What do you think of that?"

"I couldn't do *that*—ever!" Gerty cried after him. "Only naughty people *hate*!" And she stood watching Judith with stern disapproval as they walked away.

CHAPTER XXIII

IT was the first time Wistar had been alone with Judith since he had thrown in his lot with Sears and Penrhyn, and each was aware that this chance remark of the child's had recalled to the other the word with which they had parted.

She was grave, but a satirical smile lurked in Wistar's cheeks. "I see you realize," he said, "that you are one of the naughty people."

"Naughty is as naughty does. Have I really been naughty to you?"

He evaded the answer. "You wouldn't let May have me to dinner."

"Did you want to come?"

"No. But I wanted you to ask me."

"In a woman you would call that feminine inconsistency."

"Perhaps it would be in a woman. In me it was an altruistic desire to find you not a naughty person."

"I'm *not* a naughty person!" she said, more vehemently perhaps than she realized.

"But you're very easily teased!"

He looked at her with calm impersonality, resolved to know her as she was, divested of all the glamour which his love had cast about her.

The delicate beauty of her girlhood was fresh as ever, though she must now, he reckoned, be in her thirtieth year. If he had not known he would not have believed that she had much more than turned twenty. Her form was perfect in all the free, soft outlines of womanhood, her tread elastic and sure. Her cheeks were clear and vivid, and the sun smote the brown of her hair into gold. She was gay, friendly, light-hearted. But was she anything more than that?

"There is this one subject," she said, after a pause, "upon which you will always find me sensitive. What you have done—as it has turned out—do you regret it? Tell me!"

"Under what compulsion?" he said quizzically. "I did it for myself—you forbade me to do it for you!"

"That is quibble. Among many reasons for telling me I will mention one. I am very much in need of a new gown." She held out her arms, as if inviting inspection.

Her manner was light and irresponsible, but he understood very well what she meant to say—that she was as determined as ever not to accept good fortune the source of which was open to question. He had no desire to tell her the sin-

ister turn affairs had taken; and besides, it suited him to take her whimsical mood quite seriously. The gown, he observed with careful inspection, was of black cloth, and though the nap was thin in places its cut gave distinction to her figure, and its few facings and embroideries of white seemed modish in the extreme. "It appears to me a wonderful fine gown," he said. "I noticed that even before you called my attention to it."

"But the sleeves!" she cried. "You abandoned, irreclaimable man, the sleeves!"

"Ah, yes, the sleeves! Sometimes I've noticed they are more like that, and sometimes less."

"Be serious, and tell me what I want to know! I shall catch you if you quibble, and despise you!"

"Is it very desirable to have the sleeves more so—or ought they to be less so?"

"That has nothing to do with it!"

"You knew the supreme importance of sleeves that night when you refused, as you said, to 'barter your soul' for them?"

"If you really want me to hate you, go on!" His persistent mockery was trying her patience, as indeed it had every right to do.

"In many ways," he said, choosing his words with care, "things have turned out far better than I ever imagined—quite as well as you believed they would. I have to thank you for a great deal."

She nodded a little I-told-you-so! But what she said was: "Is that the whole truth?"

"Have I taken my Bible oath?"

"If you respect me, you will tell me." She said this very earnestly.

"Just now it seems that there may be trouble in store."

"I should like to know about it. Not for *that* reason," she added, as if to forestall banter. "For other reasons."

He briefly outlined the situation, minimizing its gravity, and of course saying nothing about the suspicions that centered in Ryan.

"But they promised in such matters to follow you," she said with clear comprehension.

He nodded negligently.

"That ends my new gown!"

"*Oh*, I *am* sorry!" he cried. "Please take my poor little joke—as a joke. That is only kind!"

"But if it came to a matter involving your principles, then there would be serious trouble?"

He did not answer, and they walked on in silence.

Winter had worn on into spring, and the outdoor life of the town was beginning. In Madison Square there were the usual number of curbstone preachers holding forth to knots of park loafers, curious passers-by, and workmen in their Sunday

best. As they passed near one of these they heard the word "Trusts," and, glancing aside at the speaker, recognized Andrews, his red whiskers and imperial, and pale, pasty face thrown into relief by a far from customary suit of solemn black. With a touch on Wistar's arm, Judith signaled him to stop.

The man seemed quite sober, and was speaking with apparent conviction in language unwontedly grammatical. But it was none the less evident that he was enjoying his eloquence to the full, strangely compounded of illiteracy and magniloquence.

As his shallow, excited eyes swept over the faces of his hearers he recognized Wistar, and his face lighted. "I see among ye," he cried, "a man I used to know—the most hon'able, the squarest. He used to be an independent merchant—an independent gentleman. But a trust was promoted. The octopus reached out its slimy clutches to gather him in."

Wistar turned in disgust to go, but Judith caught his sleeve. "How exciting!" she exclaimed. "I *do* want to hear what he thinks of us!"

Andrews saw her interest, and expanded with delight. "He made a stand for his independence, for his manhood. But you know the way of the ink-squid! It envelops its victim in a cloud of murk

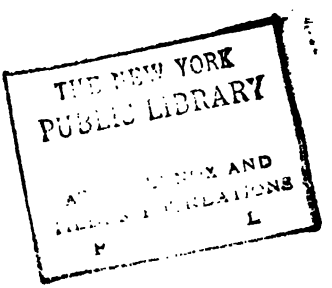
that blinds him, the effluvera of its own corrupt body!—theft, treachery, deceit! Perhaps you say he was a fool—that the wise man, when he reco'-nizes the perlution of the ink-squid avoids its life-sucking tentacles! But the ink-squid is cute, it is wary! It casts its blinding cloud about James Wistar before he was on to the game. The darkness became a false light. He welcomed his fate. To-day, as he stands among ye, he is no longer a man, though he appears the most upright. His blood has become the blood of the nauserous creature that devoured him, his stren'th, its stren'th! Slowly, but with a certainty truly turble, he is reachin' out to strangle and devour his feller-men, who he once regarded as friends, as brothers. Wealth and power are his'n. Beauty stands by his side, and is proud to stand there!"

Every eye was now fixed upon the two, and already, with a common impulse, they had turned and were walking away.

But the words of eloquence followed them. "All the more, I say, he is a plague sore on the body politic!"

Before either spoke, they had reached the business section of lower Fifth Avenue and were walking in its cañon-like shadows. Then she said, "Is there one atom of truth in what he charges? Do you feel that you have been in the least false to yourself?"

"They had turned and were walking away."


THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY
AND
RELATIONS

He thought quickly, and then, ignoring her first question, he said: "For the present, no."

In front of them the Washington Arch loomed up, bowered in the greening yellows of early foliage. Always, since he had known her as a girl, the sight of it had awakened the old melody in his heart—all the more poignantly sweet now for the minor cadence into which it had fallen with the lapse of years. He had only to catch a glimpse of it from the elevated, or the platform of a Broadway trolley, to revive the sense of all life had ever promised him. And once more, as he neared it, she was at his side!

As they turned into the square disillusion stalked upon him. Two men were approaching in the path that leads across the eastern end, in one of whom they recognized Penrhyn. "Hello!" said Wistar, welcoming a change in the subject, "he has been downtown at work on Sunday. In New York that is rare proof of diligence!"

"Not he!" Judith laughed. "More likely he is just out of bed, and on his way to the club for breakfast! He lives over there in the Benedick."

Wistar had not known this, and the discovery recalled the night when he had seen Andrews in the selfsame path. Occurring separately, the two incidents of their walk down the avenue might have been forgotten, but coming thus rapidly in

succession they took instant meaning. The harangue he had just heard was wild enough for the most part, but certain words reëchoed in his mind, and recalled the time when he himself had so unfortunately used them—theft, treachery, deceit. How had Andrews got such an idea, if not by being a factor in the business of that night? And who would have employed him, if not Penrhyn? If there had been treachery then, moreover, might not his present difficulty with Minot have an even more sinister explanation than he suspected?

As Wistar bowed to Penrhyn in passing a sardonic smile stole into the corners of his mouth. Then he stared in surprise. In Penrhyn's companion he recognized Pedey Ryan, hero of the deadly blow gun and the bloodless revolution, disguised in a flowing frock coat and sleek top hat. Between these men there could be only one bond of connection; and, as Pedey bowed in response to Wistar's salute, his expressive face wore, all unconsciously, a look of deprecation, almost of apology. "Rubber" had ceased to be the synonym of curiosity, and become that of vigilance, indeed of fear. It was clear enough, now, why at the outset Penrhyn, instead of clearing out with his promoter's profit, had taken office in the combination, why he had so persistently refused to accept Minot as a member of the executive committee. The plot against Wistar had been deeper

and more subtle than he had charged, even in the heat of anger—the stake immeasurably vaster. And placed as he now was, on the inside and subject to the will of a majority, his power to combat it was crippled.

When they came to her door, Judith asked Wistar in to luncheon. The least she could do, she said, was to offer as much for his company as Gertrude.

"Thank you," he said with the negative inflection.

"I mean it!" she protested. "If I am willing to be—not naughty—at least you might let me!"

The new fear in his mind had deepened his Sabbath lonesomeness. She at least, if she knew what he knew, would be on his side. And it was so long since he had felt anything like the touch of her beauty, her comradeship! In his heart he knew that she was all he had ever dreamed her, and more. The old instinct to prostrate himself before her came back on him. Life offered this one moment of happiness, why not seize it? But the temptation was brief. He would not bend again until he stood straight in the eyes of all. "Thank you," he repeated.

"You mean that as a reproach to me!" she said.

For the first time in his life he felt that she was seriously striving for his good will.

"If you don't mean it so," she added, "you will do as I ask."

He did not misconstrue her motives. The coquetry of vanity was a thing unknown to her, but she was full of the coquetry of the affections: he had seen her stop on the streets to win the confidence of a mongrel who slunk from her. Still he stood firm. "I was thinking of what Andrews said—of the darkness in which I labored that night. When it is finally cleared, I shall, if I may, claim acquaintance with you."

"But in the meantime," she still pleaded, "if I forgive you?"

"I must decline," he said, and left her, though not before he had seen her cheeks flush at what, in spite of himself, he had implied.

CHAPTER XXIV

OF the revelations of that Sunday morning none impressed Wistar more deeply than the fact that he had not known where Penrhyn lived. He knew every turn in the thread of the least important screw in his machines, but he was ignorant of the most obvious fact with regard to his most powerful associate. In the old days he had somewhat proudly said that his business was with men who manufacture motors, not stocks; but he now realized with humility that everything depended on meeting on their own ground the leaders of this once despised industry of finance.

To inquire into conditions in the rubber country, and even to find out whether the productive forests were in a way to be monopolized, was a work he could and must intrust to subordinates. But he was obliged to proceed in person to get a line on Penrhyn's associates and resources, and especially on his more intimate personal equation —his character, his methods, the kind of fight he would make. For as yet the evidence of the man's

duplicity was only circumstantial. Wistar's sense of honor, indeed his sense of expediency, forbade him to make any pretense of friendship. But there was a way in which he could meet the man as an enemy, and this was the way most likely to be fruitful.

The year before, Penrhyn had played on the Willowbrook polo team, which had won the championship from his own country club. Why shouldn't he make his old place on the team? It is a game that tries men's souls. To get into condition he entered the squash-ball tournament of the Racket Club, and was not displeased when, as the tournament progressed, he came face to face with Penrhyn.

They met in the third round. It was a warm day in early summer, and they played in the lightest costume—sleeveless gauze shirts and linen running breeches. As they entered the red-walled court each cast a quick, comprehensive glance at the other. Wistar was long and spare, with straight, powerful legs, wide reach of the sinewy arms, huge, bellowslike thorax and thick muscular torso. His opponent was of smaller stature, well knit, and with knotty muscles, full of spring.

Penrhyn played a brilliant game, full of difficult and unexpected, apparently miraculous, strokes that brought burst after burst of applause from the gallery. He won the first set easily. But

toward the end of the second Wistar's steadiness and endurance began to wear him down.

"Damn your legs and lungs!" said Penrhyn with rueful pleasantry. "I'm larding the lean earth. You've got me now where you want me!"

"Not if you ring in any more of those miracles!"

"Miracles!" Penrhyn cried with frank disgust. "The man who plays squash has no need of miracles!" As they took their positions for the final game he tapped the floor with his racket. "Here's where friendship ceases!" he said, laughing.

To Wistar it seemed rather where friendship began, for it was his nature to think well of the world, and Penrhyn had been a model of modesty in success, of good temper in adversity, and of sportsmanlike earnestness and fairness everywhere. Though plainly all in, he played with grit and tenacity; yet even with the match hanging in the balance he twice corrected the decision of the marker, insisting that Wistar take a point where a let had been called. Was it possible that Wistar had been mistaken in his man? The question cost him four points straight; but he pulled himself together and won the match without difficulty.

Penrhyn shook his hand cordially. "I couldn't have won the semifinals, anyway," he said;

"and I think you stand to do so." The compliment was perhaps excessive, for in his next match Wistar had to meet one of the best players in the club, who, as it turned out, disposed of him in two easy games; but it was none the less generous and good-natured.

They bathed in adjoining showers, dressed and dined together, and afterwards, at Penrhyn's invitation, went to the theater. It was years since Wistar had spent as pleasant an evening; and after a long and cooling nightcap at the club he half believed that he had done the man injustice.

Before many weeks Wistar had occasion to alter this judgment. At a meeting of the executive committee Penrhyn proposed to increase the next dividend.

"That would be a drain on our surplus," Wistar objected. His plans for the industry, now dear to his heart, required a large reserve of capital. "My idea is to reduce the dividend. The time is coming when we shall have to stand off those foreign fellows."

"That's right!" Irvingdale Smith put in cheerfully. "It is up to you to give them a black eye. But there are other ways to do it."

"Other ways than by making our cars as good and cheap as theirs?" Wistar pointedly questioned. "What ways?"

"We've got a bang-up system of garages,"

Smith answered with unabated cheerfulness. "From Portland, Maine, to Portland, Oregon, we store and care for a good majority of all our rivals' cars. We waste a lot of time and opportunity in doing it so well."

Wistar was not unjustifiably proud of these garages, and of the fact that the service in them was as liberal and efficient toward the cars of American independents and foreign makers as toward their own. "Wasted!" he said. "A good part of our earnings we make off the cars of our rivals!"

"But suppose we gave our own cars the preference? Wouldn't the public find that the best of reasons for buying them?"

In plain terms this meant that work on the cars of their rivals should be delayed, scamped and overcharged. Nothing so disgusts a motorist with his machine as to have it make long sojourns in the shop, followed by big bills and a speedy return of disaster. "I am as eager as any man to win out in this fight," Wistar answered. "But the only policy that will succeed in the long run is the policy of fairness and liberality. Who will get the black eye, I should like to know, if the public finds us out!"

"If we can't trust our own managers not to peach on us," said Smith with cool insolence, "there's something rotten in your management."

"You are aware, I suppose," said Wistar, his voice falling and deepening as his anger rose, "that in spirit what you propose is identical with all that is most noxious in trust management—secret rebates, secret price schedules, and all other devices of predatory competition!"

"I don't know anything about what you call spirit," Smith retorted. "There is no law that compels us to favor the cars of our rivals, and there is every reason why we should not favor them."

"Favor them! Why not put sand in their bearings and soap in their carburetors?"

"Not a bad idea!" Smith laughed. Then he added, in the tone of compliment, "You would make an excellent manager if you put your mind to it."

Wistar smiled grimly. "Excellent or not, I *am* the manager. And in this matter *I* decide!"

Billy growled approval.

"I object!" Smith cried, his cheery good humor vanishing. "You are our chairman, not our kindergarten lady. You have no power except what we delegate to you!"

The terms upon which he had entered the combination had been different, and it was now that Wistar looked to find the Penrhyn he had known in the squash court.

"In the matter of the garages," Penrhyn said,

"I guess we'll have to give Wistar his head." And Smith was obliged to acquiesce. Then Penrhyn added: "But it's different with the dividend. That concerns the financial end. I make it a motion."

As chairman of the committee Wistar was obliged to put the motion, and the votes were three to one.

It is an approved Machiavellian precept to concede what you have to gracefully, so as to make the concession a sugar-coating for the pill of successful coercion. Wistar perceived that there were two Penrhyns—one for polite conversation, and one for things that mattered.

In announcing the dividend to the public Penrhyn resorted to a useful bit of jugglery. He spread the report that Wistar was intending to reduce it, and then sprung the increase as a surprise. In the resulting fluctuations in the stock, Wistar had every reason to believe, Penrhyn turned a pretty penny. The incident took added significance when Wistar got his first reports from the rubber country. All signs portended that some one was trying to engross the industry, and, moreover, was straining his resources to do so.

The polo championship was now well under way, but Wistar saw that there was little to probe in the character of his associate. He was con-

vinced, in fact, that with the expiration of his term of office he would have to fight for reëlection. There were two ways of fighting. One was to form a fraction of stockholders to support him and his policy. This was a slow, difficult and delicate matter, and one in which he could not go far without publicly accusing his associate. The other way was to increase his holdings of stock. Though chief shareholder, he was far from owning a majority. He at once instructed his broker to buy in all he could without running up the price, and furthermore, to negotiate with such of his customers as might be willing for a consideration to part with their holdings.

Among these the broker mentioned a picturesque and anomalous person with wild eyes and red trimmings to his face who had invested two thousand dollars on margin when the securities were first listed on the Stock Exchange. Wistar named him at once—H. Desmond Andrews; and the broker laughed at the memory of the H. Desmond.

One by one he was completing the chain of circumstance which bound Penrhyn to this man, convicting him of gross dishonor. As yet he felt that he was not justified in using his evidence to discredit his rival, even privately, among the directors and stockholders. But he left no stone unturned to complete it, and to this end employed

a detective agency to keep close watch on Andrews.

During the early games of the polo championship he often saw Judith in the crowds of the clubhouse verandas, and as often he thought, not without satisfaction, that to her eyes at least the evidence already at hand would be sufficient. But could he tell her? Not though the happiness of her life hung in the balance—then least of all. Could he even bring her his excuse for the mistake of that fatal night with regard to her father—whose duty it had been to tell her? He puzzled his mind for days over this case in casuistry. But in his heart he always knew that he could not be a bearer of tales. And the conviction was growing on him that in spite of all appearances her father had not been guiltless.

And so it came to the deciding game of the championship series.

CHAPTER XXV

IF Penrhyn had shared Wistar's desire for better acquaintance he could not have done more to satisfy it. Through the earlier periods of the game, he had played second forward for Willowbrook, and with unfailing alertness and dash; but at the opening of the final period the score was a tie and he shifted to first forward. This brought him face to face with Wistar, whose steadiness and brain work had made him captain and back of the Cedar-top four.

The natural inference was that Willowbrook had staked their chances of victory on new tactics; but during the previous interval Wistar had seen Penrhyn ride up to the brilliant crowd beyond the edge board, and speak to a young woman in whom for the first time he recognized Judith. Was it possible that the man had paid him the compliment of jealousy? The world of sport has little esteem for what it calls the grand-stand player. Wistar could have wished Judith a thousand miles

away, and he cursed the luck that had given him the glimpse of her face, alight with the excitement of the contest, and prettily framed in a billowy boa of white feathers, thrown about her shoulders in defense against the cool wind that was blowing in from the ocean.

At a crisis like the present, in a game as rapid as polo, anything may happen. The losing team will stop at nothing in the hope of a goal; and both sides, reserving their best ponies for the last, are mounted on the handiest, hardiest, fleetest and most spirited horseflesh, of fourteen hands, that the world affords. And such are the varying fortunes of the game, that in a few minutes of play goals have been known to come as if from a rapid-fire gun.

Penrhyn had now mounted a black Algerian barb, Sirocco, trained on Mediterranean polo fields, for which he had paid upward of three thousand dollars. It was a huge pony, that would strain every finger of fourteen hands, and its wide eyes bespoke as much of intelligence as ever gets into an equine skull. It had courage, too, to stand up against the fiercest scrimmage, and its speed in the open was unexcelled.

Wistar's mount was named Jenny, which name she had brought with the brand on her flank from a Texas range. Jenny was, however, a perfect lady, and in Wistar's fond esteem the best polo

pony he had ever owned, or known. True, he had read of better animals, and notably a heroine of fiction who was not only familiar with the tactics of team play and kept the score in mind but acted as leader of her quadruped mates, and would probably have advised the famous player and captain who rode her if his understanding had been quite, instead of almost, equine. But Wistar was skeptical. He had himself frequently had occasion in the thick of a rapidly shifting contest to make sure how the score stood by a glance at the dangling tally balls. There were, in fact, only two points on which he trusted Jenny implicitly. One was to be fond of sugar, and stand by the man who gave it to her; and the other was to follow the ball. He suspected the tasteful little lady, in fact, of laboring under the illusion that the three-inch sphere of white was an extra delectable lump; but, whatever the peculiarities of her horse sense, she scampered after it with the eager endurance of a terrier, and the speed of a greyhound; and that was all he asked of Jenny.

The only chance of snatching the victory was by the hardest riding and the most accurate team play. But Wistar had even more to contend with than he feared. Penrhyn, again his opposite, was plunging his spurs with every turn deep into Sirocco's velvet flank, already covered with blood,

and was charging the heavy animal hither and yon like a madman. The trick of riding an opponent off, which looks so dangerous from the clubhouse, is in reality the safest of maneuvers. You have only to slip alongside your man, lock the shoulder of your horse forward of his saddle, and you can swerve him as if by a hand on his bridle. But that maneuvre is as difficult as it is safe. Time and again, in the play that followed, Penrhyn came at Wistar full speed at an angle of forty degrees, dashing Sirocco's powerful and pointed shoulder into Jenny's side. Such tactics are calculated to throw a fright into any but the steadiest—horse and man; and the only condition of success is that the umpire shall be lax, or not looking.

"If you do that again," Wistar cried, "I'll demand the penalty of a foul!"

"Why not take your doll-rags and go home?" Penrhyn asked, sweeping by. "This game is polo!"

There are football players who regard it as the game to slug an opponent, knee him, or twist his neck, provided the chance of being penalized is less than the chance of putting him out of the game; and players of a similar conviction are not unknown in polo. It is all a question of whether one prefers to live by the traditions of sportsmen or the letter of the rules.

In another minute, as Jenny bounded after the ball, Penrhyn repeated the assault. The only defense against such play is the defense offensive. Reining up at an angle, Wistar broke the shock upon the faithful Jenny by opposing his own lean, pointed knee against Penrhyn's thigh.

"Ouch!" said Penrhyn; and Sirocco faltered at the unexpected impact.

Jenny's strong point was quickness and certainty on her feet. She fairly leaped from the collision and dodged across the field after the spherical lump of sugar, overtaking it near the edge board. There was an opening to score, and Wistar seized it. With a clean forward draw he played the ball into position for a try at goal, and Jenny followed it with hoof beats that sent the turf flying.

Wistar's comrades did not fail him. One after another they rode off three of the enemy, while he swung at a gallop into position for the stroke. The end of the game was at hand, but it was only a matter of seconds to snatch the victory.

Penrhyn, disconcerted by the unexpected shock, had wisely refrained from following Wistar's first dash, and now, burying his spur in Sirocco's bleeding flank with every stride, he galloped straight down the field at the ball, converging upon Wistar at a broad angle. It was a neck-and-neck race for the victory. Wistar saw him out of the tail of his eye, and Jenny saw him too, for she dug

her little hoofs into the turf as she had never dug them before. Twenty-three seconds flat was her mark for the quarter, and she was in the full swing of her best pace. She kept even with the stallion, stride for stride.

As long as she did so it was, according to the rules of the game, Wistar's ball. To the goal was a drive of seventy yards, but he had done better a score of times; and his nerve was never as steady as when his blood was boiling. And it was boiling now, for as Sirocco swept on, closing the angle between them with greyhound strides, he saw the blood flying from the raw spot left by the incessant spur.

Nearer and nearer the two horses swept, until Penrhyn so narrowly threatened a collision that even the other players rose in their stirrups in anxiety. Wistar feared a foul—and then dismissed the fear: his rival's game was to fluster him and frighten Jenny with a threatened tumble. In a stride or two Penrhyn would have to swerve, or foul him openly and flagrantly. The thought steadied him. Jenny could not have this comfort, and already to-day had suffered many a rude shock; but with pluck undaunted she held her course firm and true, and never abated her stride until Wistar threw the lines on her neck. Then, at this signal for the stroke, she slackened into an even, steady gallop.

As Wistar raised his stick, he heard Sirocco's hoof beats—now at his very side—still regular, firm, and quick as ever. His heart leaped, but his shoulder swung true. Then came a blow from the side that lifted Jenny off her feet. In another instant both horses and their riders were hurled together along the turf.

Penrhyn swung free of the saddle; but Wistar, who had held his eye throughout steadily fixed upon the ball, felt the hot lathered sides of Jenny rolling over him, and the crushing weight of both horses.

He was awakened by the first dash of water on his face, and raising his head he saw the ball, lying where it had lain.

"A duhrty trick, a sthinkin' Irish trick," said Wistar's groom, as he splashed the water. "His horse is the better gintleman."

The umpire had pressed through the crowd of dismounted players. "Have you anything to say?" Wistar managed to ask.

"In my official capacity, only that the play was a foul, and that Cedartop has a free try for goal."

Wistar struggled to his feet, and called for a new mount. There was a knifelike pain inside him, and his head was swimming; but Penrhyn was by, speaking words of plausible apology. He stepped into the saddle, and no one offered to dissuade him. Then he rode out to the ball, and

Penrhyn faced him, at the prescribed ten yards. The two looked at each other quite as if nothing had happened.

Shooting a goal in the heat of play, at the full, easy swing of the gallop and with a clear field in front is one thing, and a sitting shot in the face of four opponents, accurately placed and alert, is quite another. It was for this difference, beyond question, that Penrhyn had ventured. Only a miracle now could save the game—and the championship.

The fall had unsteadied Wistar's nerves. He paused before the stroke, and swept his eye slowly about the field. There were people there—he had not half realized how many. They seemed strangely hushed. Beyond was a low-lying English house, its half-timber sides showing faintly through a mantling growth of ivy, and its roof bowered in elm trees. It looked very peaceful. On the horizon was a flake of quiet blue, where the Atlantic lay serenely, as if in the lap of two sand dunes. Wistar almost forgot the pain that was knifing his vitals. Then he closed his eyes half a moment, and remembered. Once he had faced an unbeaten eleven in blue, when all the fellows looked to him and his comrades . . . He didn't feel the pain at all now.

Opening his eyes, he gauged the lie of the ball, and the length of his stick. Then he lifted his

arm above his head, and brought it downward, swinging it firm but relaxed upon the pivot of his shoulder. He hit hard and true, and as the sound was heard across the silent field, Penrhyn rose in his stirrup to block the ball. It soared free above his head, flying straight for the goal. Half way in its course it fell upon the turf, bounded once or twice, and then rolled slowly and more slowly. Once again there was the scurrying of ponies, Cedartop galloping to protect the ball in its course, Willowbrook to check it. The advantage of position lay with the defense, and five yards from the fatal line the Willowbrook back overtook the ball and swung his stick for a back hander.

Thus far the instinct of the game had carried him; but now he paused, with his stick held high in air, and to the amazement of the multitude, rode on, side by side with the ball. At the goal line the white sphere hopped into the air, and then lay still, scarcely a yard beyond. The generosity of the sportsman had risen above the zeal of the partisan. It was as if he had presented to Wistar the victory so fairly won. It was not " the game "; but sportsmanship it was.

The crowd read his purpose like a flash, and from four sides burst forth an acclaiming shout.

Wistar's first thought was of Jenny—whether she was suffering too, poor lady. He found her

by an automobile, companionably nosing a young woman in a white feather boa—having evidently led the indulgent groom there for that purpose. Wistar rode up and asked if she was hurt.

"Sure she's fresh as a daisy. How is it with yourself, sir, may I be asking?"

"Oh, I do hope you are not injured!" Judith exclaimed. "It was very rough play; but you deserved to win, and we're *so* glad you did win!"

Penrhyn cantered up to them. "My dear man! My *dear* man!" he said. "I did my best to hold the beast, but he was mad with excitement."

"Howld him! Look at his flank!" said Wistar's groom. But he knew his place, and he said it under his breath.

"You were wrong, Stanley," Judith was saying, "very wrong, ever to think of riding so, on such an animal!"

Jenny was still nosing the white feathers.

"She thinks they may be sugar," Wistar apologized. "When I changed mounts, I forgot to give her the lump she expected." He reached into his pocket and found nothing but powdered granules. Jenny herself had crushed the last domino. "Poor old girl," he said, stroking her mobile nose, "did we make you spoil your own sugar? Never mind! There's more in the locker." And taking the bridle from the groom he led her away.

It was a fortunate pretext, for the knife inside him kept turning, and the white feathers spread before his vision, filling it, from the green of the grass to the blue of the zenith, with what now seemed to him wavering lumps of sugar.

CHAPTER XXVI

HOW many weeks that pain lasted Wistar did not know. Through the long days and longer nights of his fever a single idea haunted him, obsessed him. Sooner or later he would have to lock horns with Penrhyn in a final struggle for control of the combination; and there was more than an even chance, he foreboded, that in that struggle he would be defeated, and Minot and others of his kind ground under foot. In such an event he saw but one recourse, and that the blackest—to quit the trust and join the weaker faction in the fight for decency and law. That he would be able to wreck the combination he had little doubt. He had made its strength, and better than anyone else he knew its weakness. It was to avoid such a fight that he had entered it, and the result of all he had done would be to aggravate his plight. To plunge Judith's father from hope to despair would have been bad enough; but his heart grew sick at the thought of what it would mean to dash him from success and power to ruin. She had

called him the cave man, and accused him of seeking to fell them all with his club. As his fever mounted and the pain in his side cut deeper the idea grew on him that he might have to do just this.

One evening he awoke with a sense of physical relief. The pain was no longer inside. It was outside, in soft linen bandages. He was suffering from a horrible nausea, and his tongue was so thick that he could utter nothing; but little by little his mind cleared, and he recalled with terror a nightmare under which he had been laboring—recalled it with terror and relief, for he now knew that it was only a nightmare. Judith had lain dying in a dingy hall bedroom, her struggle against poverty ended; and as she saw him she looked upon him as the author of her fate, and turned her eyes, pitiful and full of hatred as he had never seen them in life, toward the tawdry wall. A beam of watery sunshine, struggling in, brought the glints to her hair, though palely. Then, of a sudden, he had seen a clot of crimson, where she had got the wound of which she was dying — a blow from the cave man's club.

He opened his eyes to expel the agonizing vision, and saw by his bedside a woman in striped gown, white apron and cap. Then he understood. It was a long time before he could

speak, but at last he asked her thickly: "Did you have to go in far? What did you find?"

"We went in so far," the nurse said cheerily, "that we saw the tail feathers of your soul." Her theology was orthodox, in spite of a rigidly scientific training. "But we sewed you up tight so there's no chance of its flying away this time."

Wistar smiled. "What did you find was the matter—before you sewed it up?"

"There was a bow of blue ribbon on it," she said, "and it had come untied." One doesn't allow a patient's mind to dwell on the details of his malady.

Wistar was silent a long time and then, "Blue ribbon?" he asked.

"Baby blue—it was a pure soul. We tied it up neatly in a love knot."

"I should have preferred a square bow," he said.

"It's a spell we laid with the love knot—so now your sweetheart can't lose you."

He thought of Judith. "I'm afraid," he said sadly, "that the operation will not prove successful."

The nurse did not understand. "In two months," she said, "you will be on your feet again."

Two months! His old fears swarmed back on him. Glancing about, he recognized Billy and

Minot on the other side of the bed. "Hello!" he said. "I must see you fellows on business." At the word they faded into darkness.

Then the nurse said, "Hush! Go to sleep!" and stroked the fine, lank hair on his forehead. He went to sleep, but in his dreams he was fighting a fight in which there was a most perplexed mingling of motor cars and ponies. And the prize was a white feather boa.

CHAPTER XXVII

ALMOST before he recovered from the nausea of ether Wistar took advantage of the telephone by his bedside to get in touch with the affairs of the combination—at first surreptitiously, when the nurse for a moment had left him apparently sleeping, and then with her enforced consent. It proved as he feared. He called up his agencies one by one, as far as St. Louis and Omaha, and by a few leading questions ascertained that Penrhyn and Smith had assumed his office and were already introducing their methods.

Minot was soon a frequent visitor, and he elicited from him similar intelligence. Penrhyn was using the power of the combination to fight the independents with the well-known tactics of predatory competition. There was strong evidence that he was even preparing to infringe on Minot's patent, relying on the power of money and the technicalities of the law to protect him. And the ultimate end of it all, as was becoming clearer and clearer in the reports from South America,

was to gain a virtual monopoly of the industry throughout the world.

Before his accident Wistar had had hopes of being able to control the coming election of officers. For weeks he had been quietly increasing his holdings of stock. Now he had a stock ticker installed in his bedroom, and day by day directed his campaign by telephone. He was powerfully aided here by the very seriousness of his illness, for Wall Street in general, and Penrhyn in particular, had grown accustomed to regard him as out of the running. The surgeons, with professional conservatism, had understated the chance of his recovery.

To make success secure and indubitable, however, he felt that it was necessary to gain strong adherents among the stockholders. And here his illness crippled him far more than it helped him in his operation in the market. One may buy or sell by telephone anything from a paper of pins to a billion-dollar trust; but corporation politics is a matter of personal contact and influence. A few of the stockholders he knew well, and when he called them up they were sympathetic, and agreed to stand by him. But somehow he felt they were influenced less by their reason and personal preference than by consideration for his illness. With a great majority, even of the largest stockholders, he was unacquainted. Time and again he tried

to imagine himself urging his cause into a vulcanite receiver, but he only succeeded in appearing in his own eyes what is known as a squealer, and perhaps also a prig. Penrhyn had broken a personal pledge; but what was this to the world of finance? Penrhyn was breaking the law in spirit and in letter, but could he convince a stranger of this fact, or of its enormity, in brief and half-audible conversation over the wire?

As he lay prostrate beneath the pain of the half-healed gash in his side his mind was feverishly active; but there was little or nothing he could do to commend himself as the exponent of a vigorous and successful administration; and especially as his rivals had, as his friends had somewhat darkly intimated, taken advantage of his plight to make their canvass first. Though Penrhyn had failed in his primary purpose in their encounter at polo, he had succeeded admirably in this matter, which was of vastly greater moment.

In this crisis Wistar felt himself forced to measures of desperation. His financial resources, he felt sure, were greater than Penrhyn was aware. Vast as is the publicity which, in this curious American democracy, attaches to wealth, there are many large fortunes which are listed in no almanac, and of which the writer of Sunday-newspaper specials has never heard, though now and again

the settlement of an estate or the exigencies of a combat in Wall Street makes them known. Such was the fortune which Wistar had inherited, and which he had vastly increased by able merchandizing and wise investment. In behalf of the industry which for two years he had held in his own ten fingers, and which was his one real interest in life, he was willing to risk his last dollar if need be; but even at that he was finally reduced to an expedient which in the old days he would not have thought possible to him—he began making his purchases on margin. When it became necessary to vote the stock he would be about again, and hoped to induce his bankers to complete the purchase for him.

It was not a new experience. Once a doctrinary trust-buster, he had become the heart and soul of a gigantic consolidation; and the result had been to awaken in him large ambitions—ambitions that differed from those of Penrhyn and Sears only in being patient where theirs were headlong, straightforward where theirs were devious, solidly patriotic where theirs were visionary or rapacious. Now, laboring in a life-or-death struggle for honor and righteous power, he took up with methods which he had always abhorred as the invention of the stock-speculator and the predatory manipulator of markets. By so doing he multiplied many times his purchasing power,

so that he was able to double, perhaps to treble, the holdings of any of his associates.

It is true that in this he took no great risk. Large as his purchases had been, they had been so skillfully distributed over so many weeks that they had advanced the price of securities by a very few points. If he won there might be a slight reaction; but with the situation in his own hands there would be no permanent loss. If he failed to secure control he would be the first to know it, and so have the drop on the market when it came time to sell. In the matter of mere dollars he was, in fact, virtual master of the situation. He had been accustomed to say that the big men of Wall Street played with marked cards, with loaded dice. Well, that was just what he was doing now.

If he had any twinges of conscience at backsliding from his strait-laced ideals they were silenced by the fact that there was only one other course open to him—to abandon the combination and range himself against it with Minot and the rest of the independents. That he was unwilling to contemplate, for not to mention the new ambitions of the past two years, it meant that he must work that very injury to Judith to avoid which he had joined the combination.

Yet great as was his wealth it became gradually evident that, even at the most liberal estimate of the aid he might command from his friends and

his bankers, it was not great enough. The securities of American Motor were valued by the hundreds, not tens of millions. Whether by hook or by crook, it was presently manifest that he would not be able to secure enough stock to control the approaching election of officers.

When the outlook was darkest, however, fortune placed in his hands an unexpected resource, in fact a trump card. It had taken his detectives only a few days to discover that, while Andrews was living in a manner which for him was positively sumptuous, he had no steady employment and no source of income beyond the meager Sunday gleanings from his hat, passed in Madison Square. With the first of a new month, however, they saw him make a midnight journey to Penrhyn's rooms, which was immediately followed by a period of riotous living. A single occasion of this sort might be a coincidence; but when it was repeated once and again it became evident that the man was living by blackmail.

The chain of circumstantial evidence was now complete enough to justify the most incisive action. Wistar summoned Minot and dispatched him on an errand of diplomacy to Mr. Sears.

CHAPTER XXVIII

TO Mr. Sears, Wistar's accident and illness, distressing as it was, had brought a certain sense of relief. Of his personal obligation to the man who had made possible his tardy good fortune he was keenly sensible; but the fact remained that he foresaw an early crisis in which, as a business associate, Wistar would prove difficult. For Sears's ambition as to the future of the combination in motors was bolder than so conservative a man would tolerate. And then there was that vaster vision which Penrhyn had flashed before him, and which in his imagination, so long baffled by the mirage of wealth and power, became a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. Obstacles there were—when are there not?—but Penrhyn was forging ahead. Already he had organized a strong faction among the board of directors and general stockholders to oust Wistar from power.

From this faction Sears's sense of honor held him strictly aloof. Yet on abstract principles he was warmly in sympathy with it. Of all the associates he had ever known, Penrhyn had the larg-

est outlook and the liveliest capacity for handling big affairs. The captains who have made American industry what it is have not been remarkable for devotion to the cause of social progress or for academic correctness in personal conduct, but they have had an extraordinary faculty of doing things; and as one who himself lacked this faculty Sears had a vigorous appreciation of its utility.

If Wistar had succumbed to his misfortune, as Sears had at first believed, the way would have been quite clear; but the news that he had survived was not wholly disconcerting, for when it came to the election of directors and officers there would still be valid reason for his preferring another executive, since he must—a man with health unimpaired.

One circumstance, however, lessened his satisfaction: Penrhyn and Smith had seized control of the practical affairs of the combination and had instantly begun to tighten its grip on the industry—plunging into precisely those ruthless and illegal methods from which they had promised Wistar to keep it free. To Sears this seemed grossly indecent. From the outset Penrhyn had forced him, though secretly, into devious ways; and now, only a few weeks before the election that would formally put everything on a new basis, he was involving him in a transaction that could scarcely fail to become known. Already, in fact,

Penrhyn had been obliged to call a meeting of the executive committee to give formal sanction to his assumption of managerial power. It would hardly be possible to keep the true state of affairs from Billy; and that meant that Wistar, weak and ill as he was, would hear of it.

As a gentleman Sears despised Penrhyn. All his traditions, his very nature, rebelled against thus openly and flagrantly betraying the man who had done so much for them. It had actually made him ill, confining him to the house—though here it was helped on by an attack of inherited gout, which with old-fashioned propriety he called rheumatism, and which he had augmented by the more luxurious life of the past two years. In consequence of this illness, Penrhyn had decided that the meeting should be held in his library—an arrangement which Mr. Sears found repugnant, but against which he could hardly protest, since in Wistar's absence he was chairman of the committee. In fact his presence was necessary for a quorum.

On the morning of the meeting Mrs. Boyser announced that Minot had come to deliver a message from Wistar. At the sight of his card the old man grew nervous and perplexed. Was it possible that Wistar had already caught wind of what was going on? Almost at the same moment, as it happened, Billy called him up on the

telephone and confirmed this foreboding, though in a manner characteristically casual.

"Wistar wants me to be sure to get there," the young man said. "Have I time?"

"That depends upon where you are."

"I'm out shopping with May."

"But I thought she went to try on her trousseau!"

The wedding, long delayed to complete May's schooling, was in fact fixed for the near future.

"That's right," said Billy.

"What? *With* her!" Sears raised one hand in dignified horror. "Yes! You must start at once!"

Indistinct words came over the wire, of which Sears made out only one—blushing. "Yes," he said in parental accent, "I am blushing! And May should be."

"I was just telling May *I* was," explained Billy. "She isn't!"

"I'm glad you have some modesty between you!"

"I'm escaping with what I have left. Don't let them get down to business till I come."

The old man hung up the receiver and raised both hands. He turned to find Minot on the threshold, smiling. "This new generation," he sighed. "Her mother's daughter."

"Oh, I don't know!" Minot laughed. "*We*

were engaged in the crinoline period. Don't you remember?" He reached out his hands as if for an embrace at the distance of a hoopskirt. "If I were younger I might be reconciled to the modern girl!"

Their manner was that of lifelong friends—two gray-haired, boyish cronies; but in an instant it became gravely altered.

"I came about that committee meeting, too," Minot said. "Somebody got busy as soon as Wistar was done for."

"Penrhyn and Smith have been managing affairs in his place."

"Precisely! And already Penrhyn has reversed Wistar's whole policy."

The very keenness with which Sears was sensible of the impropriety of what Penrhyn had done made it impossible to discuss it with an outsider —in fact a rival. "I'm sorry," he said, "if Wistar has been troubled by any such suspicion."

"Suspicion! What Wistar has found out is a certainty! Exactly what it amounts to, of course he hasn't told me; but there's a nigger in the woodpile, and the nigger is Penrhyn."

"It's the European combination—there was urgent need of meeting their aggressions upon us."

"It is more than that! Penrhyn is out for the scalps of us independents here. Already he has put the knife to my throat."

"That isn't possible!"

"My dear sir, I'm bleeding already! Among the rest, he has gone about to steal—pardon me if I speak the English language—to steal my gear. But I'm not here to tell you my hard-luck story—only to warn you that it's up to you to stand by Wistar."

"Personally, I—I—" Sears stammered, and was silent.

"Personally you are a gentleman, my old and tried friend, and pledged in honor to Wistar." Minot spoke gravely and kindly; but as he went on his manner became searching and significant. "In business you are servant of a trust, and a trust must, when the devil drives."

"The devil drives!" Sears assented.

Minot sharpened to the attack. "If you people break your word to Wistar—you must know that he will fight! If he were well—his case is a strong one; by stating the facts as they are to the stockholders, he could get enough votes and proxies to stand you off. But he is ill—his hands are tied. Unless you tell them the truth — no doubt Penrhyn can make them believe what he pleases. Perhaps he has already organized a party? If he's cut in ahead of Wistar——"

"I can scarcely discuss such questions—with an outside party."

"I must say, however, that unless you take Penrhyn in hand you will have to face scandal."

"Scandal!" the old gentleman echoed.

"Wistar once accused you of bribery and theft. Now he knows it was Penrhyn."

Sears started with surprise and alarm.

"What would it mean to Penrhyn—and to you!—if Wistar were to publicly expose that crime?"

"If he has proof—disgrace! Without proof, such a charge would be libel. Did you say he had proof?"

"I didn't say." Minot laughed dryly. "Here it's you who are the outside party. But this much I can tell you. By driving Wistar to the wall you put him face to face with a dangerous alternative. He wishes you well, and your family; but to him what Penrhyn is doing is a crime. When he believes a thing wrong, he fights it. And he *can* fight, I tell you! Two years ago, when Penrhyn tricked him into the trust, you imagined you had disarmed him. You gave him the most dangerous weapon of all! Standing as he does now, on the inside and at the head of everything, what he says carries conviction—what he does, authority. If he fights, he will win. That will mean scandal and ruin to you, and to your daughter poverty."

Sears gave way to abject terror. "He intends that!" he gasped.

"Not yet! It was to avoid it that he sent me here."

Sears lay back in his chair. "How much does Onderdonk know of this?" he asked.

"Little or nothing. It was to keep him in the dark that Wistar sent me here. You have been allied with Penrhyn throughout—bribery, theft, treachery—and Billy is engaged to marry your daughter—very much engaged, it appears!"

Wearily Sears rose from his chair. "I'll do all an honest man can," he said, taking Minot's hand.

They were both silent a moment.

"In view of Wistar's continued illness," Sears added, "it may be necessary to appoint his successor as manager."

"But it is only a matter of weeks until Wistar will be about again!"

"The affairs of the combination are very pressing."

Minot looked at him firmly. "That doesn't sound well to me. I'm afraid I can't carry much hope to poor Wistar. Only—remember! He is a fighter, and this is a fight he will carry to the finish—no matter who or what stands in his way."

Again they were both silent. Presently Judith came in, and Minot perceived that the interview was at an end.

CHAPTER XXIX

JUDITH!" Minot exclaimed, his ancient eye taking in her youth and freshness with delight. "May I still call you Judith?" he added, as she gave him her hand. "This old house, this room, everything takes me back—how many?—twenty years. I called you Judith then!"

"My name is Judith, Uncle F'ank'in," she said, mimicking a child's accent.

He laughed at the memory she evoked. "Can you bow to me now as you used to bow?"

She took her skirts in her fingers, and dipped him a girlish courtesy. "I'm seven years old and a half," she lisped, "and I'm never going to be married!" He laughed, and then she added in her older manner: "You see I haven't been! And I'm an old maid. To-morrow is my birthday—thirty!"

Minot turned slyly to Sears. "Won't anybody have her?" he whispered audibly.

Banter was a thing beyond the old gentleman's comprehension. "Before we were poor," he said, "a regiment. She sent them all away. Then we

never saw anybody. I used to imagine—that is, Wistar was one of the regiment."

"Daddy!" Judith protested.

Minot nodded to her sympathetically. "Great old joker, Sears," he said.

Sears smiled an *ex post facto* smile; it was a new pleasure to be taken as a wit. "Oh, I keep my eyes open!" he said. "After Wistar was thrown in with us again, when he entered the combination, he became another man. Instead of burying himself in his work, he dined out, even danced! And the game he played at polo! Judith was always asking news of him. But, somehow or other, he is never able to find an evening to dine with us. You know," he concluded with elephantine levity, "I've suspected a little quarrel!" It is, in fact, a dangerous thing when a serious man takes himself seriously as a joker.

"Daddy!" Judith cried in horror. "I'm sure we didn't beg him! You may remember that the last time he dined here he was none too polite to you!" She looked about the room as if for a pretext to change the conversation. "Have you noticed the new furniture?" she said, indicating a colonial set, in fine keeping with the ancient room, which had only that day been installed in place of the black walnut and haircloth of two years ago. "Daddy gave it to me for my birthday!"

"And your horses?" Minot inquired. "I re-

member you riding in short skirts—playing scrub games of little girl polo!"

"I wanted her to have her horses back," Sears said, "but it seems she's turned trust-buster."

"Nonsense, Daddy! I believe in trusts!"

"Whatever's the reason, she won't tell me. But she won't take a penny of the new money—and it's all hers!"

Judith's glance fell. There was a string and a scrap of paper on the floor, which the workman had left when he unwrapped the furniture. She picked them up and put them in the waste basket. Then she said: "How is Mrs. Minot? The last time I saw her I thought her cough was worse. Can't you get her to the mountains?"

Minot's face clouded. "I got her to promise, and then things took a bad turn with me, and that frightened her again." Judith looked to her father in a manner that gave Minot warning. "Think of that!" he said, reverting to the lighter tone. "Two women who refuse to spend money!"

"But surely, there's no question about *your* good fortune!"

Minot laughed. "Then you *are* a trust-buster! I'm one too, but I must say your money is all right—as long as you have Wistar in control."

"As *long* as we have?" Judith questioned.

A look of fear came into Sears's face.

Minot made haste to change the subject. "Still asking about Wistar!" he teased.

Judith blushed, but retorted with amiable dignity: "What a very bad joke, Uncle Franklin! Why shouldn't he keep control? When he joined us we all promised that he should. Didn't we, Daddy?"

Sears nodded. At the approach of the delicate topic he had hobbled over to the desk, and was now busied with papers.

"There is something worse than that!" said Minot, still bent on changing the subject. She had seated herself on the window seat, and he sat down beside her. "Something that has made you think ill of him," he said in a low voice; "and what you think makes a difference!"

"He told you that!"

"Not a word! After the operation, as he was coming out from under ether, he kept saying it over and over—quite unconscious of us—his tongue as thick as a drunkard's. At first I didn't make out the words; and then before I realized what they meant I had them by heart. It's none of an old boy's business, but they were such sad, true words. You call him the cave man. What do you mean?"

"The cave man? I'd forgotten! He buried himself in his dingy and dark old factory, and when we came by and asked him to join our great

and glorious combination, he made angry faces at us and reached for his club."

"But now—he's heart and soul of all the great and glorious things you have done. And I guess it's all for you." He paused with sudden realization. Sears was more nearly right than he had supposed. "That's why you've been so interested in him! If you only could!"

She shook her head. "It isn't any use! Men don't make themselves over—not really. Scratch the advanced and progressive Mr. Wistar and you'll find the cave man."

The old servant announced Penrhyn, and when he entered Minot bowed and went out.

Sears arose and hobbled after him; but as Judith opened the door for him he paused. "There are my new papers as trustee of your estate," he said. "You have forgotten to sign them, and the old ones run out to-morrow."

"I was waiting for the notary. And my birthday has come before I realized—birthdays always do!" She opened a drawer, and lifting the revolver—now no longer an object of terror to her—placed the papers beneath it.

At the head of the stairs Minot protested against his host's painful courtesy. "Not a step farther!" he said. Then he added: "Remember! It's your own peace of mind that's at stake—perhaps your honor!"

CHAPTER XXX

PENRHYN had had no trouble in putting a good face on his encounter with Wistar at polo. Such are the canons of sportsmanship that none of his fellow-players had contradicted his explanation of it—that is, outside of the intimacies of the clubhouse. Several of the newspaper accounts of the game gave him personally credit for the generosity of allowing Wistar's shot at goal to score. Valuing highly a free and enlightened press, he had always treated the reporters with the utmost considration—indeed with his natural manner of comradely good humor; and he had taken advantage of an interview after the game to let fall a hint to this effect. He could not think, he remarked casually, of profiting by so painful an accident.

To Judith he said as little as possible, for like all accomplished liars he was sparing of falsehood; but he had not been able to deny himself one embellishment, chastily calculated to give his deed a heroic background. He had long had a slight touch of heart trouble—the result of the

excitement of Wall Street and too many cigars; and he permitted her to discover a fact which was not a fact—that the collision and fall had increased it. For the sympathy he thus gained the only cost was that for a time he was obliged to forego the comradely privilege of smoking in her presence.

Already, however, he had decided to regain this. When Sears and Minot were gone, he took out his cigarette case and lighted a cigarette.

Judith took it away from him. "Doctor's orders!" she said, and threw it into the fireplace.

"By the way," he laughed, "that matter of your executor's papers is important. There's likely to be a fight at the next election of directors."

She looked at him squarely. "*That's* what Mr. Minot meant! They intend to put Mr. Wistar out of office!" Going to the table she took the papers out of the drawer and glanced through them. "What does it all mean?"

"Some of the fellows on the board of directors say that just now, with the European folks making trouble, we need a well man, and an aggressive one." He sat on the window seat as he spoke, and stretched out his legs on it.

"But you and father have promised to stand by him! You will do so?"

"Naturally!" He spoke in a casual tone.

He had no fancy for the topic, and taking another cigarette, lighted a match.

She dropped the papers, and, running across the room to him reached for it. He turned from her, laughing, and with his back hunched up drew a few quick puffs. But she leaned over him, and grasped the fingers that held the cigarette.

In retaliation he put his hand on her head, and held it so that her hair brushed his cheek.

"Stanley!" she cried, in instinctive revulsion. "*How* can you do such a thing?"

He made a rueful grimace. "You say we are comrades. If you were a real comrade you would have twisted my ear or flattened my nose. But you put on all the airs of the affronted lady."

She considered a moment, then gave his ear a vigorous tweak.

"Gee-hosaphat!" he cried, laughing. "If you would only be this way always!" he added in a mock serious vein, nursing his ear. "To-night will begin your thirtieth birthday—at one hour after midnight."

"How do you know that?"

"I made Mrs. Boyser tell me. She said your face was wrinkled like an apple in February, and that you had an A1 pair of lungs."

"You have no right to know such things!"

"Do you think there's anything about you that I don't want to know?" His face, usually so

matter-of-fact, lighted up with an expression that was positively appealing. "I'd give the fingers of my hand to see you as a baby, as a child, as a little girl! Boyser saw it all; but when I tried to make her tell me, she wasn't polite."

"What did she say?"

"She said, 'Aw-go-wan'!"

In Judith's own eyes she had been a horrid little girl, spoiled and self-important. But there was something very dear in such interest in her; and as he spoke his glance was unwontedly endearing.

"You know what you promised," he said, half timidly, half pleading, "your thirtieth birthday! I don't dare think of it. It goes to my head like champagne! But all day long it has been haunting me, that hope! It has made Wall Street gay, the very noises of Broadway an intoxication!"

She did not answer, and he looked out of the window across the square, through the trees of which filtered the busy sounds of the city below.

"There it is," he pursued, "the heart of the city, of the whole country, throbbing with life! The big office buildings, the harbor, the railways! With you to work for, what couldn't I do! Our motor trust, I can make it the biggest thing in all that world of big things. And that is only the beginning! In the end I shall force my way to the very top—see the island down there beneath me, the whole country, stretching to the Golden

Gate—I shall, if I can do it for you! For years you have dropped out of the world—the world you were born to lead. Only let me have you—together we shall go back into it—wealth, position, everything yours!"

Striking in upon the gray monotony of her life, the words shone like fire—the sort of fire before which few women of spirit can remain quite cold. Yet she fought for the firm foothold of self-command. "That," she said, "is the kind of conversation, I was taught, no modest and proper young woman listens to, no modest and proper young man permits himself."

"Love is never modest, and seldom proper."

"Stanley!"

"I know! Your heart is set against love. That is the modern madness!"

She shook her head. "Mad! If I only were I might listen to such conversation. I'm hopelessly, primitively sane."

"True love *is* sane," he said, reflecting, "but it is not primitive. In primitive days, love was a frenzy. The cave man hunted his wife with a club."

"The cave man? What cave man?"

"Any old cave man! You know! Bearskin pants and frowzy hair—lived in a cave. Who'd you think? The strongest cave man clubbed out the brains of his rivals, and then went for *her*."

"Poor cave maiden! Couldn't she get away?"

"She tried to. It was her instinct to flee. But it was also her instinct to be caught. He caught her by the hair of her golden head and dragged her to his cave."

"Horrors!"

"There she learned that she adored the man with the strongest club—that in her heart she must adore him."

"Poor thing!" She laughed; but in the laugh was a little shudder.

"Not poor thing at all! That's all there ever has been to love—primitive love—all there ever will be! Girls have ideals of the grand passion. The grand passion is the modern form of the cave man's club—the only thing that makes a girl give up a dozen lovers for one man. But you—you are too wise, too wary." He was still lounging on the window seat, and she stood beside him, intent on what he was saying. The early autumn sunlight fell full upon her, lending splendor to her simple house gown, and casting an aura upon the luxurious disorder of her hair—"So wary," he concluded sadly, "that I have lost all hope of landing the club on the hair of your golden head."

He had spoken half laughingly, half in earnest, but she was quite serious. "You, Stanley," she said, "are not the cave man."

He looked at her, questioning. "I don't pre-

tend to be. It's a blow to my vanity that I'm not; but I try to be reconciled. I don't think you'd care for the cave man. At eighteen—perhaps! But you have grown up, in heart and in mind. And how you have grown up! Everything a man can care for in—I don't say in his mate, for I never knew the man who could be that to you! But a comrade—what a comrade! That was our compact, you remember, two years ago—bachelor comrades together! In all these months I have never spoken of it—never even hinted! And I scarcely dare to speak of it now!"

"But the cave man, the one with the bearskin—trousers, I mean! What if some day he should come after me with his club?"

"Once he might have. But you're no longer the kind he cares for."

"That sounds very well, but somehow I don't like the way it feels." She paused, and then said: "About Mr. Wistar?"

"You're not afraid of him!"

"Afraid? No! But you haven't explained to me—you mean to be fair with him?"

"Fair? Of course! But he is making it hard."

"Yet we've known all along he's an obstinate conservative."

"Everything we have worked for is within our grasp, and he is letting it slip through his fingers. The whole board of directors is against him."

"But you and father——"

"We have given our promise," he said with admirable directness and simplicity.

She was silent for a long time, as it seemed to Penrhyn.

"And *your* promise to me?" he said at last. "Comrades—bachelor comrades together?"

"You mean that—literally?"

He paused just the fraction of a second. Then he spoke with conviction. "That is the only way I could mean it."

"All my life I have hoped such a thing might happen. But they say—and I am beginning to believe them—that it is not possible, not in the scheme of nature."

Penrhyn had once pleaded with her for the normal. But now he said: "It is possible—for those who truly love."

"I am very lonesome!" She spoke as if to herself. "When May is gone I shall be forsaken and forlorn!" Again she was silent.

He watched her, quiet, intense.

"You promised me!" he ventured at last.

"I shall keep my promise, too," she concluded.

He leaped from the window seat, caught her two hands and drew her toward him.

She evaded, and with a quick movement of her hand across his face flattened his nose with her thumb. "Bachelor comrades!" she said.

He was still nursing the cartilage when May and Billy came in.

"Not late for the committee meeting?" Billy asked.

"Smith hasn't come yet," Penrhyn answered nasally.

"We've had the loveliest morning!" May said.

"You bad child!" Judith admonished. "You must get on with your trousseau things! You should have gone to Françoise!"

May smiled demurely. "We went."

"We!" exclaimed Judith.

"Billy wouldn't leave me! Françoise thought it the grandest joke! She said—" May paused in embarrassment.

"What did she say?" Penrhyn demanded.

"Help, help!" cried Billy. "Won't anybody respect my modesty!"

May rose on tiptoe and whispered to Judith.

"Maya!" Judith cried. Then she laughed.

"The shameless French hussy!" Penrhyn cried. "Naughty, naughty! Oh, oh!" Then he whispered audibly to Onderdonk. "What did she say! Tell me!"

Billy turned on his heel.

"Mr. Irvingdale Smith," announced Boyser, opening the door.

CHAPTER XXXI

IN the incidents of two years ago Onderdonk had long felt that there had been an element of which he had been kept in ignorance. But he had learned enough of late from Wistar to know that at the coming election of officers they would have to fight for their power. Even in this matter of the present policy of the committee, he feared the worst. With Mr. Sears on their side, it was true, the two factions were equally divided, even in Wistar's absence; and it did not seem likely that Penrhyn and Smith would stand by the course they had begun when Wistar was supposed to be dying. But he was by this time well aware of his opponents' skill and boldness. It was necessary to meet them at every point with the utmost resolution. And he had now to take command.

"It has come to my knowledge," he said, as Mr. Sears took the chair and disposed his game leg beneath the table, "that some one of us has lately been reversing Wistar's policy as general manager." As he said this he looked squarely at Smith, and then at Penrhyn.

"If Mr. Onderdonk has any charge to make," said Penrhyn, stretching himself in luxurious indolence upon the window seat, "may I suggest that it is in order to make it specifically?"

"Among other things, we have begun a course of predatory competition against Minot."

"The man has refused a fair offer to sell out to us. May I ask what course Mr. Onderdonk would recommend?"

"I deny that our offer was fair. His machine is better than our best in its line. It was the part of wisdom and honesty to buy it in even at an advanced figure, and abandon Smith's car."

At this Smith sat up and smiled with piratic benevolence.

"Begging your pardon!" Billy concluded.

"Don't mind me!" Smith vouchsafed with a grin. "I'm not sensitive about the machine I manufacture—only the machine I drive!"

Billy thought he saw a chance to score. "What make?" he said.

"A Minot," said Smith with unconcern. "And you?"

"A Minot, too. You see we are agreed that the car *is* better."

"We'll shake on that!"

With a twinkle he made as if to reach for Billy's hand; but Billy ignored him. "That day Penrhyn blew up near Wistar's garage in one of

my cars," Smith pursued unabashed—"if the papers got hold of such an accident it might hurt the trade. Smith blown to glory in a Smith machine! But are you afraid of your car?"

"Oh, I don't know!" Billy laughed, his good nature prevailing. "My old car was painted red, and one day while I was shifting gears on a hill, along came a farmer with a bull. The beast dragged the old Reuben at me, and before I could get going on the new speed, slewed me into the ditch. The papers did get hold of that. Such a thing can't happen with Minot's gear. Or if it does, it's a bull on Minot."

Smith rose solemnly and grasped Billy's hand.

Billy was not slow to see the purpose of such joviality. "As a fellow-motorist in distress," he said, "I shake your hand. But as regards Minot, I have doubts. I want to know just what you are doing to him."

"Does that fall within your bailiwick?" Penrhyn inquired.

"It does!" Billy answered firmly. "As a member of this committee I am morally responsible for what it does. If you are acting illegally, it is my right—my duty—to protest. I demand that the whole thing be put down on the records of our meetings in black and white—to be produced, if necessary, in a court of law."

Penrhyn was startled, but in a moment he said

in his customary tone: "Did Wistar ever say 'by your leave' to us?"

"No," said Billy, nonplused for a moment. Then he added quickly: "But Wistar was our authorized manager!"

"Precisely!" said Penrhyn. "But he is out of the game, and it was to authorize his successor that this meeting was called. I propose that we do so."

"I second the motion," said Smith.

"But that means reversing his whole policy! And you promised to stand by him!"

"As long as he could get about and do business, we stood by him. But now the committee has to proceed without him, according to the best of its comparatively feeble ability."

Billy jumped to his feet. "This is a matter of vital importance, and you decide it without warning, without discussion. I demand that we wait until Wistar can be with us."

"When you've been in business longer," Penrhyn said coolly, "you'll know that important matters don't wait."

"Important matters wait for important men! You know, better than anyone, why Wistar is not here. You broke the fair rules of the game at the risk of his life, and now you are breaking the law at the risk of his honor, and to the loss of your own!"

Penrhyn turned to Sears. "Mr. Chairman," he said, "a motion has been made and seconded. I call for the question."

Sears was obviously uncomfortable. "I promised," he said, "to use my influence to wait for Wistar."

"Pardon me," said Penrhyn, "if I insist on a point of order. As chairman you have no influence. It is your duty to put the question."

The old gentleman did not answer.

"I vote yes," said Smith.

"I vote no!" cried Billy.

"I vote yes," said Penrhyn, and looked at the chairman.

Sears remained silent.

"The question is carried," Penrhyn concluded.

Billy strode into the middle of the floor. "Let me warn you!" he cried. "Wistar is a sick man. He lies on his back, with a gash in his side that throbs at every pulse—tortures him if he so much as lifts his head. But he is not dead yet—and he's not the dying kind! When he *is* well he will be well as ever. And he will fight—you know how he fights—like a wild-cat——"

"I'm in the wild-cat business myself," said Penrhyn with a slow smile.

"Yes," said Onderdonk, "but the sort of wild-cat that fights in the dark! Wistar fights in the open, and he will drag you there, show you

up as you are in the light of Wall Street! You have jumped into his boots. Stay there if you dare! The time will come—" Billy was very angry and the words choked in his throat.

There was a knock without, and Mrs. Boyser came in.

Penrhyn did not heed, but smiled again at the young man with indulgent cynicism, and said: "The time *has* come."

"Mr. Wistar has come," said Boyser.

"What!" cried Penrhyn, his self-assurance falling from him like a garment. "You are crazy! He's flat on his back, half dead!"

"Sure, at the sight of him," she answered, "I thought he was all dead. It's his own ghost that he is."

CHAPTER XXXII

WHEN Minot returned from his interview with Sears his report confirmed Wistar's worst apprehensions. It took no clairvoyance to read in it the vacillation of a soul sorely tried—the traditions and habits of a gentleman in unequal combat with inherent weakness and plausible temptation.

"I'm going to get up and go out," Wistar announced to the nurse.

There was something in his voice that alarmed her. But she speedily recovered confidence. "Try it," she said. It was a bold course to take, but she knew her man and trusted in his good sense.

Slowly Wistar rose in bed, his face tortured with pain.

"Bravo!" she said, mocking him. "You stand it almost as well as a woman would. But now let's see you walk!" After so long a spell in bed the strongest man is like a baby in its first effort to command its legs.

Wistar rose to his feet, and, though his head swam, he managed to make his way to where his clothes were laid in the wardrobe. "My dear

Miss Peters," he said, "for three weeks I have been flicking my muscles, just so I could do this if I had to."

"You shan't go!" she said, now thoroughly alarmed. "One strain on your side and you will tear open the wound!"

Wistar had been moving with catlike softness and smoothness. "I know it," he answered. "That's why I'm so careful."

"You are risking your life!" she cried. And Minot standing by took part with her.

"The lives of others are at stake," he said to Minot. "Will you kindly tell Mrs. Minot—my own condition entitles me to be heard—that she is to take care of her health. I guarantee that she is justified—that she would not be justified if she didn't!" Then he turned to the nurse. "And it's a matter of more than life, Miss Peters. It is a matter of justice and honor. If you try to force me back I shall resist—*you* know what that may mean! Let me go and I shall see that no harm is done to the wound."

If Miss Peters had known the crisis as well as she knew the man, she would have sat on his head as it had lain on the pillow.

When the motor entered Washington Square and glided up to the curb, Judith had been looking out at the window, and as Wistar, haggard and spectral, walked cautiously and erect up the

marble steps, supported between Minot and Miss Peters, she hurried to the door. Intuitively she took in the situation. "You mustn't!" she pleaded. "All that we promised you—father, Stanley—as long as you live, they must keep their word. By risking your life you risk everything! And what can you possibly gain!"

His suffering made him benign. "I gain this," he said, "that after to-day there will be no doubt in that matter of sleeves. I love the old ones, but I know they ought to be more so."

"It's no use," said Minot; and even Miss Peters pleaded that he might do what he had to do as quickly as possible. So they toiled up the stairs within, and presently Wistar stood before his four associates, the anguished pallor of his cheeks standing out from the black neckerchief and fur coat which he had thrown around him.

"Am I in time?" he asked of Onderdonk.

"Yes! To be bundled back to bed, where you belong!"

"Am I in time!" Wistar demanded sternly.

"Just in time," said Billy, obeying a sign from Minot and Miss Peters.

Wistar sank back into an easy chair and looked about him. "What I say must be short. But it will be to the point. Where are we?"

Minot went out, and with a final word of caution Miss Peters followed.

"Penrhyn owns that he has got out his knife," said Onderdonk, "and he has proposed to make Smith general manager in your place."

Penrhyn's teeth set. "That motion," he said, "has been carried."

Onderdonk raised his hand with a significant gesture. "But it has not been declared so by the chairman! Wistar votes with me against it!"

"I do," said Wistar.

"Now," cried Billy, "the deciding vote rests with Mr. Sears!"

Wistar looked to the old man, upon whose rectitude, he felt, the world was staked. "You will not forget!" he said, in a voice none the less stern because it was soft and subdued. "Law is law, and honor is honor!"

Sears was silent.

Penrhyn cut in with decision. "Because old John Sherman passed a freak bill against trusts, are we to have our hands tied? That law is broken every day, by every big industry in the country. Have you ever heard that any trust manager has been sent to prison? Have any of them been fined more than a shopgirl's carfare?"

"Will you argue that way," Wistar asked, very quietly, "in the open board of directors—before the stockholders in the annual meeting?"

"Yes! A thousand times! *They* listen to a trust-buster! You make me laugh. They will

turn you down like *that*! And they are right. You are hide-bound by narrow, academic scruples. We are looking to the future of a great industry."

Wistar laid his head back on the chair. "Penrhyn the philanthropist!" he said.

"Wistar does not believe in monopolies in trade," Penrhyn shot back at him with mounting rancor, "but he does not scruple to pose as having a monopoly here of wisdom and virtue."

Smith ventured an inward chuckle.

"I have no wish to bust Wistar's virtue trust," Penrhyn pursued, his eyes and his words trained upon Sears, "yet it is something that the gentlemen I represent are meeting a foreign aggression with the vision and the will of statesmen."

Wistar leaned forward, his eyes like wind-swept coals in his ashen cheeks. He, also, spoke to Mr. Sears. "This is the holiest exhortation to virtue since the oil trade was plundered to establish universities and churches. Has Mr. Penrhyn detailed to you what he is doing to the independent manufacturers—to Franklin Minot, for example?"

Sears shook his head.

"I tried to make him," said Billy. "He refused."

"Minot came with me," Wistar answered. "Ask him in."

"I object!" cried Penrhyn. "This is unheard of—a low trick to work on our sympathies!"

Wistar looked firmly at Sears. "Your decision, Mr. Chairman," he said.

"Show Minot in," said Sears.

"I knew you would be with us, sir," said Billy.

Wistar lay back again in his chair. Even now he shrank from the danger of exposing the old gentleman to Onderdonk, and he rejoiced in this sign that such extreme measures would not be necessary.

As Minot entered he looked in alarm to Wistar. "For God's sake, man, think of yourself," he pleaded. "Already you've been here five minutes. Let me take you home."

Onderdonk took the cue, and together they laid hands on Wistar's shoulders.

For the first time Wistar lost his self-control. "Everybody tries to bully me!" he said, with the grievance, in fact the petulance, of the invalid. "And I am weak—I need all the strength I have."

The two men stood apart from him.

"Tell Mr. Sears," Wistar said to Minot, "what these men are doing to you."

"It's the old game. They have forced the makers of wheels and bodies to raise their rates to me twenty per cent. The foundries charge me double for my castings. And I gather that half

of what they squeeze out of me they are giving to you people in the way of secret rebates."

"Is this so?" said Wistar to Penrhyn. "If you deny it, we can prove it against you by our books."

"I don't deny it," Penrhyn answered sullenly.

"You and the makers of parts," commented Wistar, "have cut the throat of this man, and together you are drinking his blood!"

"Put it that way if it pleases you!"

"Is that all, Minot?"

"Not half! When they failed to force me to sell my invention they lured away my foreman, and have started to steal it from me."

Penrhyn and Smith were silent.

"That is impossible," said Mr. Sears. "You are protected by your patent."

"You are fortunate to be so ignorant of patent law. Men who have had experience of it know that a big concern like yours dares to do anything. My own lawyer advises me not to fight, but to sell out to you if you offer me half a price."

"I think I can say for my colleagues," said Sears, "that we stand ready to give you a full price. We shall not drive a bargain. What we have at heart is the good of the industry—a great American industry."

"You say 'sell out.' What you mean is sell out and get out. If I intended to do that do you

think I'd have told what I did? My business is my own. I made it, and as long as I live I shall control it! For twenty years I fought against injustice when my family was sick and starving. There is still sickness; and what you threaten may mean starvation. But there's plenty of fight left in me. Give me my right—what I asked at the outset—and I will work with you and for you. Try to hold me up, and I will sell my life dear, I tell you! An American industry! I am an American merchant. As long as I live I shall be free!"

A dead silence followed the outburst. Penrhyn and Smith sat unmoved. Sears fidgeted.

"This answer is final?" Wistar asked.

"Final."

"I'm sorry," Wistar said, "but I would have done the same."

He bowed and Minot went out.

"Since you have raised the question of patriotism, Mr. Sears," Wistar said slowly, "let me say that it is the one which I myself hold most deeply at heart. Perhaps you have not noticed what is happening in this Hamiltonian republic of ours, this Jeffersonian democracy? The movement is slow, but already it has gained a mighty momentum. The spirit of the time is swinging us to two extremes—a heartless plutocracy and a rabid proletariat. The factions are violently opposed

to each other, but they are more violently opposed to every valuable instinct in American life. If things continue as they are going, one of two ends must come—an empire or socialism. The hope for the future of the republic, I believe, rests with men placed as we are placed—upon the vigor and the honesty with which we combat the greed of the money power."

"Rot!" interrupted Penrhyn. "You talk like an idiotorial."

Wistar looked at him quickly, the glow in his eye leaping into flame. "A great American industry!" he cried, his voice rising to its full power. "You, Stanley Penrhyn, and you, Irvingdale Smith, are slaughtering Minot and his fellows because they stand in the way of your private greed!"

Penrhyn jumped to his feet. "This is a personal attack!" he shouted.

"You have discovered that!" Wistar laughed bitterly. "It is—because it is the answer to a personal attack! I hoped I should not have to make it—for your sake, Mr. Sears, and for the sake of those who belong to you. But you force me. Before I speak, I give you one more chance to side with me against these men."

Sears's distress was pitiful to see; but he was silent, and Wistar was obliged to play his trump card.

"When Penrhyn urged me to join you—even then he was planning to wrest my power away from me, to use it for his own evil ends. He tricked me then as he has tried to trick me now."

"Oh, come on, Wistar!" said Smith with burly expostulation. "You've allowed this thing to get on your nerves. You're not feeling well. Since you must talk, let's talk about something pleasant!"

"I call for the question!" said Penrhyn.

"It is true—I'm not feeling well!" Wistar rose slowly from his chair, swept his antagonists with a glance of fire, and then looked steadily at Sears. As he did so his hand clutched at his groin. "Every beat of my heart stabs me in this half-healed wound! But if my side opened again and let out my entrails, I would proclaim what this man is!"

"Wow! Wow! Wow!" remarked Penrhyn. And then, with the effect of adorning a phrase, he added: "Yow! Yow! Yow!"

"The theft of my papers from my safe two years ago—it was Penrhyn who put Andrews up to it and paid for it."

Penrhyn's face mantled with rage and hate. "Andrews has peached!" he cried.

Wistar smiled through his pain. "You yourself have peached, in these very words you speak! Andrews is discreet. He is paid too well. He is kept in cold storage—blackmail!"

"He calls it my ice-bill," said Penrhyn, recovering a cynical composure. "But you can't prove it."

"I *can* prove it." Wistar paused and the silence of fear fell upon his four associates. It was the critical moment, and he ably took advantage of it. "What is more," he concluded, "I can prove that Mr. Sears was party to that theft."

Billy stared from Wistar to Sears, from Sears to Penrhyn, and then fixed his eyes on the old gentleman.

Penrhyn was not to be surprised into a second confession. "It's a lie!" he shouted.

But Sears spoke also. "I used all my influence against it," he said. "He wouldn't listen to me."

"Yet you knew what he was doing," Wistar incisively reminded him. "And you aided him by your silence. You can't deny that!"

"Neither can you prove it," Penrhyn retorted, "against him or against me!"

"Andrews invested the money in our stock. Will you be able to explain where he got the money?"

Penrhyn was clearly taken aback. "How do you know that?" he cried.

"From my broker—by accident. And the night of the theft I saw Andrews leaving your rooms.

To this day he goes to see you regularly to collect the money on which he lives."

Penrhyn was dumb.

Wistar turned to Mr. Sears. "I call on you to defeat his motion, to stand by me till this man is driven from power. If you don't I shall prove him a thief—in the court of common criminals, where he belongs."

For a moment Penrhyn seemed crushed. But his face cleared and gave evidence of his intensely active mind. Finally it broke into a smile of triumph: "Oh, will you do all those things?" he said coolly. "Do you remember who was with me when I met Andrews? It was Mr. Sears. Do you remember to whom Andrews sent the letter? To Mr. Sears. Make any charge you choose. In a court of law it is he who will have to answer."

Mr. Sears rose from his chair, his face one note of abject fear. "I did it under protest," he found words to say.

"You dirty blackguard," said Onderdonk, striding toward Penrhyn. "Get out of this house, or I'll kick you out."

"Stop!" said Wistar. "There is a motion before the meeting."

Penrhyn donned an air of magnanimity. "I will do all any man can to take what responsibility belongs to me. But the facts are the facts. It

rests with Wistar to say whether Mr. Sears is to be branded as a criminal, his family the family of a criminal."

It was Wistar's turn to stand silent and amazed. Penrhyn's reasons for sparing the old man, he was inclined to believe, had once been no less than his own. But two years had passed, of the record of which he was ignorant. Very likely the young financier would not be equal to his threat. But abyss after abyss of baseness had yawned before him, and now this, the deepest of all. He did not dare, he had not the strength, to put the threat to the test.

"You don't answer?" Penrhyn said sardonically. "Right enough! People don't do these things! Meantime, I call for the previous question."

The old gentleman's lips parted as if he were about to speak; but no words came.

"It rests with you, Mr. Chairman!" Penrhyn prompted him. Then, as Sears sat speechless, he spoke on, his words of sharp threat and command persuasively enveloped in the soft velvet of his tones. "With scruples such as Wistar's, all your life long you have failed in deal after deal—risked everything, and lost it. I bring you one last chance—the biggest you ever had—or any man! You believe with me. Whether you stand by me or not, I shall win. If you value your

position as a director, as an officer of the corporation, if you believe in the future we hope, you will help me down this trust-busting fool here and now."

Wincing before Penrhyn, Sears turned in agitation to Wistar. "Of this crime you speak of," he said, "you know I am innocent. As to the general question of our policy as a consolidation I can only say that I disagree with you."

"The motion is carried!" Penrhyn cried. "We win!"

Sears nodded.

Onderdonk started to his feet in amazement. But Wistar sank faintly into his chair.

CHAPTER XXXIII

FOR the moment Wistar's strength was spent; but he had not fainted—he was not the fainting kind. As he lay exhausted in his chair, tortured by the pain in his side, he heard a raucous whisper of Smith's to Penrhyn, the purport of which only gradually dawned upon him.

"Did you get on to Wistar?" the amiable pirate said. "Half dead as he is, the hair on the back of his neck rose and bristled. When a man has that kind of fight in him—thank Heaven we've got the drop on him! I'm off to get busy—you know!"

That could only mean one thing. Ignorant of Wistar's slow, steady buying in the past, and convinced that he was now intending for the first time to fight them for control, they were thinking to get into the market ahead of him and forestall him. It was the thing Wistar most desired, for it gave him the chance to sell his considerable holdings, get out of the trust with a profit, and range himself with Minot against it—to stand once again where he had stood at first, and with no less fighting power. In itself this would be a

dangerous blow. If, as Wistar had reason to believe, Penrhyn and Sears had plunged on the speculation in rubber, it was not unlikely to ruin the trust, and both of them with it.

Then came the friendly voice of Billy. "If it's a question of fight, old man, tell me what to do!"

In alarm at Wistar's collapse, Sears, mindful of his duty as a host, had gone out to summon the nurse. Penrhyn had followed Smith into the hall. Left alone with Billy, Wistar outlined his plan. "Do you think we can do it?" he asked.

"If *you* think we can, I think so, too."

"I think we can. But are you willing to follow me into the last ditch? Even if it ruins Mr. Sears —and that means Miss Sears! Think of it, and then think of it again."

"Think! I can't think! All I can do is to see red and go blind with rage!"

"Then wait till you can think!"

"In this case, I don't have to. You are a man! I am your partner, your comrade. Those others —God! I didn't know there were that kind! Old fellow, I stand with *you*!"

Wistar smiled with slow but deep exaltation. "Thank Heaven!" he said, "there is still one man in this land." His eyes were closed in pain, but fumbling, he found Billy's hand. "Now be off," he concluded. "Watch the market. When

they buy, telephone me; I'll give the order to sell. Don't worry about me. I'll rest a bit, and then Minot and Miss Peters will take me home. Call me up here if you have anything to tell me soon."

The nurse and Minot had, in fact, already come in, and as Onderdonk went out they supported Wistar to the window seat, laid him out on it, loosened his few garments, and made sure that all was well with his wound.

As they were finishing Sears came back from the study, now no longer the harassed man of affairs but the dignified and thoughtful friend. He offered a room and a bed, and the services of his kitchen.

By what skill of casuistry he had succeeded in justifying himself to himself Wistar did not pause to consider. "My dear sir," he said, "I am more concerned for you than you could possibly be for me. I beg you to believe me! This fight you have seen here to-day isn't a circumstance to what you will have to face—only an opening skirmish. What I intend, of course I can't tell you." He paused, and Minot discreetly went out. "But I beg you to remember one thing: for two years I have held this combination in the palm of my hand. I made its strength, and I know its weakness. In the end, if you keep on with Penrhyn, I shall have to crush you both, blood and bone!"

The old man shook his head. "I have made my decision," he answered.

"But your daughter—what would be her decision?"

A look of horror came into the mild, dreamy eyes. "You won't tell Judith!" he almost gasped; and then he pleaded: "Her love is all I have in the world. She doesn't understand affairs. She would despise me! Surely, you would not turn her against me!"

Wistar's lips curled in scorn. "Once, though I didn't mean to, I told her the truth. It was not a happy occasion. In the open meeting just now I told that truth again. Much good it has done me! Carry tales of you to your daughter, who loves you, believes in you? Thank you, no! Not though your ruin is her ruin also, your sorrow her sorrow."

"I thank you," the old gentleman said.

Judith knocked at the hall door, and looked tentatively in. "Is he all right?" she asked of the nurse, who had taken her station in a far corner. Then, reading the good news in her face, she came up to Wistar. "Thank Heaven you are still alive!" she said.

"I have nine lives, like a cat. Every one of them is wretched." But as he said this, and looked into her eyes, his face was almost happy.

She laughed gently. "Eight of them are dead,

poor dears. Won't you let us put the last little life to bed?" She laid a hand on his shoulder.

"It is so much weller and happier here, with you. I haven't known in years what it is to rest as I am resting now! Listen! I can hear the little life purring!"

She did not answer, and Wistar closed his eyes, blissful for a moment in spite of his grim resolve.

Miss Peters had already slipped out—to give free scope, perhaps, to the charm in the blue love knot on the tail feathers of his soul.

Judith took her father by the arm and gently led him to the door. Then she came back to Wistar, and laid her hand on the hair of his forehead. "Our promise to you—we have broken it!"

Wistar was silent. With the cool pressure of that hand upon him, what use was there for words?

"To prevent what we have done," she began, and then broke off with a quick question. "What *have* we done?"

Wistar did not answer.

"You have risked your life to-day. And still you must fight?"

She was not altogether ignorant of affairs, he perceived, in spite of her father's assertion.

"Shall you be able to win?" she pursued. "Tell me!"

He opened his eyes with weary disillusion. "Won't you let me forget all that?" he said.

Going to the table drawer she took out her executor's papers, and with them the revolver. "Then my shares—if I sign these papers father will use them against you? Few as they are, in a close fight, they might mean all the difference."

Clearly, she knew more than a little of affairs. Would it be possible to keep her in the dark about her father? About Penrhyn?

When she spoke again it was with sudden resolution. "Your love for me . . . two years ago I made use of it—in a matter of money! And when you did all that I begged of you, I forbade you the house!"

Wistar raised a hand in deprecation.

She held forth the revolver in the palm of her hand. "My excuse—if I have any excuse—is this! Father is weak. Oh, I know it! Better than anybody! Another failure—I didn't dare risk what it might mean! But now his honor is at stake—his honor and mine! We promised that we should help you to do what you thought right. Tell me! Is it true that you are forced to fight him?"

He was silent still; but she took his silence for assent. "From to-day I take command." She showed him the papers, and grasped them to tear them across.

His heart leaped in response to her honest, loyal courage. "*You* are a *man*!" he cried. But he

added quickly: "Don't do that! Think what I have to do!"

Her hand faltered. "Don't overvalue me!" she said, very gravely. "If the worst comes to the worst, what will it mean?"

"What it would have meant two years ago. The loss of everything."

She had been right. The mother Eve died hard in her. Honest as she was for herself, now as then she resented it in the depths of her heart that this man who loved her could stand thus against her.

"And still," she said, "you don't hesitate——"

"I foresaw all this from the start," he pleaded. "I have done all a man could do to avoid it. You say I have risked my life to-day. Do you know why? Because it was my last hope of befriending you! Now——"

She stood upright before him, and the sunlight that streamed through the window smote her abundant hair into flakes of gold. "And now?" she prompted him.

His manner was of a sudden austere, with almost a touch of ferocity. "Now, I *must* fight, though every blow falls on your golden head."

"You *are* the cave man, violent and merciless!" Her tone was acccusing; but it was also as if she were searching his heart, and were awed by what she found there.

"I am—what I am!"

Still she sought to probe the depths of his impulse. "You would make all my life bare and wretched—ruin those I love—father who is weak and old, Stanley who is young and strong——"

He raised himself to his elbow. "Penrhyn!" he said with an outburst that was not stayed by his pain. "Penrhyn has made you love him!"

"I have said I would marry him."

"You—marry Penrhyn!" he repeated with sullen intensity. His heart cried out in warning to her, but he controlled it. He must be silent—now doubly silent. Yet if ever he had been merciless, it was in holding his peace.

Penrhyn came forward from the study door. How long he had been standing there Wistar did not know. "You spoke so loud," he said, quiet and sardonic, "so loud I overheard your—what shall I call them? Congratulations?"

The telephone rang, and, raising himself painfully, Wistar went to the receiver on the table. It was Billy, and he detailed the worst of news. He had gone downtown on a subway express—the very train Smith had taken—and already there was evidence of heavy buying. "The sooner we begin," said Billy, "the better."

"Go ahead!" Wistar answered. "In twenty minutes I shall be in my rooms, and you will hear from me." He hung up the receiver with decision.

Then he turned to Penrhyn. "You spoke of congratulations. Congratulate me! To do what I must, I need courage. You have given it to me!"

"You mean to fight us in the market for control," Penrhyn answered with quiet assurance, "to put me out of office, and Mr. Sears!"

It was the idea Wistar most wanted to foster. "I offered you a fight," he answered. "You will get it."

"But, Stanley!" Judith cried. "We *promised* to stand with Mr. Wistar—to stand *by* him! Whatever you do, I shall keep our promise." With a quick movement she tore the papers across, and tore them again.

Wistar's heart leaped to his throat. In a close fight for control, as she had said, the few hundred shares that made up her little fortune might have turned the scale; but it was a very different fight he had now embarked on. The time was past when they could be of any service to him. But what she had done meant more to him than if she had given him the balance of power. Tears streamed to his eyes, and to hide them he turned without a word and left the room.

When he had gone, she faced Penrhyn, a question on her lips. But before she could utter it he said: "I have a lot to tell you; but just now they need me in the Street. Good-by!" And he too left her.

CHAPTER XXXIV

WHEN the story of Wistar's manipulation of the market in American Motor became history he was given credit for one of the brainiest and most subtle turns in the recent chronicles of the Street. But the fact was that chance, at once the idol and the terror of the speculator, paved the way for him.

The market, though strong and active on the whole, had been fluctuating in a manner for which the financial writers of the daily press found it impossible to find an explanation—or, rather, to find the same explanation, for they accounted for it on widely different grounds. Then at the very hour in which the executive committee was in stormy session, a rumor became current that the "progressive" faction in the board of directors was about to take command, and by reversing Wistar's conservative policy to strengthen the hold of the combination on the industry and increase its earnings. A sharp advance at once took place, both in the volume of trading and in the price of sales; and, lambs being of the nature of sheep, the advance, as frequently happens, attracted the spec-

ulative public. No combination of circumstances could have been more fortunate.

From the outset, though Wistar sold largely, his opponents and the public bought more. The price of the stocks not only held firm, but increased, on the whole, steadily. Penrhyn, meanwhile, with a recent and vivid impression of Wistar's caliber as a fighting man, easily mistook the activity for evidence that he was buying.

The fact remained, however, that as Wistar lay in his bed with the telephone beside him, he managed the situation with admirable skill. Almost daily he was beset by the financial reporters with requests for an interview. At first he refused to see them, plausibly alleging his illness. But presently he decided to ask them up and submit to their questions. Bismarck used his reputation for diplomatic mendacity to make truth serve him in lieu of falsehood, blinding the world to what he intended by proclaiming it in precise terms. Wistar's reputation was for sternly honest, even quixotic, conservatism, and the speculative world was all the more inclined to rely on it, because it regarded him as having the dullness as well as the honesty of conservatism. The advantage he took of the reporters was thoroughly Bismarckian.

Necessary as it was to make Penrhyn believe that he was buying with a view to the control, he feared that if the public became convinced of this

it would withdraw from the market, dreading the reaction that follows a factitious upward movement. He answered the reporters with the words and the manner of truth. When they asked if there was not a party bent on reversing his policy, he admitted that there was; and when they asked if he were not fighting in the market to defeat it, he answered that he was not—that he had tried this and found it impossible. He neglected to say, however, just what he was doing. If the measure of a lie is its effect, then this was a whopper.

The press credited Wistar with telling the lily-white truth, and gave the impression that he had thrown up the sponge. Financial editors are not always unbiased observers. When a big company is floated, considerable blocks of stock not infrequently find the way into their possession. Such gifts are managed delicately and diplomatically. No service is ever asked in return, no obligation hinted at. But now the newspaper men, with whom the promoters of American Motor had been liberal, confirmed the antique observation of Caius J. Cæsar, the first great American and originator of the double cross at bluff, that people easily believe what they wish to believe. For a long time they kept themselves and their readers firm in the conviction that Wistar had withdrawn from the conflict, and that an era was at hand of increased earnings, and—what is even more alluring—of in-

creased dividends and a consequent rise in the price of the stock.

Penrhyn, on the other hand, magnanimously gave Wistar credit for an able and useful bluff, and continued to buy. This also was what Wistar had counted on. The commonest fallacy in clever men is to read in others their own particular motives and methods. When, weeks afterward, it became known that a plain man's single white lie had served the purpose of two such notable deceptions, there was admiration and envy in the temples of legitimized thimble-rigging.

To maintain the attitude of strife, Wistar and Billy had at the outset drawn up a call for proxies —a circular letter, which they distributed among the stockholders, large and small. It stated in general but forcible terms the nature of the issue, and solicited all who were honorable and patriotic to delegate to Wistar the power of voting their stock. The two had great joy in concocting this letter, and greater when they received the few answers to it. Admiration was expressed for Wistar's principles, and sympathy for his prospective defeat. But even of those who took the trouble to write not one in ten declared for his side.

Billy divided the letters into various piles, which he labeled with the characters of their senders. There were orphans acting by advice of attorney, male orphans, who thus showed that they

had reached years of discretion. There were pillars of society and pillars of the church. One letter from a Fifth Avenue clergyman was so long and so very explanatory that Billy gave it a place by itself and called it Gibraltar, because, in the words of a university wit, it was such a windy bluff. Professional coupon clippers he called white mustachers, and two active directors, friends of theirs, he called white waistcoaters. One of their correspondents was a kid-glove socialist, whose determination to stand by " a more vigorous policy " resulted from a conviction that " the aggregation of wealth in big corporations commonly called trusts was the readiest way of demonstrating the fallacy of the prevailing economic conditions and the speediest road to the socialization of industry."

Miss Peters, meantime, caught their spirit, and developed a lively interest in the ticker, which had been installed on the side of the bed opposite the telephone. Wistar jocularly advised her to try a flyer, boasting shamelessly that he had a sand tell on the cards.

" Would it be immoral? " she asked. " What would the priest say—if I won just enough to buy my fall hat? "

" It would be no more immoral than hats are inartistic," Wistar assured her.

She gave him the money, and he placed it for her. When she produced the hat she asked him if

he thought it very inartistic. It had a cup where the crown should have been, and the cup was surrounded by roses which raked backward and upward to a portentous altitude.

"It looks like a golf hole on a bunker," he said. "By all the canons of art, it is a monstrosity." On a second glance he added, "But it becomes you wonderfully." This was, indeed, true, for as Wistar now philosophized, women have a way of redeeming their offenses against the canons of logic and art, as they do those against the austerer moral code—even of shining by means of them.

The incident reminded him of the old matter of Judith's clothes. Her last chance of rehabilitating them was now gone. The very sum he had diverted into this roof garden of Miss Peters's was derived, as it were, from her. And when poverty came, he could not help reflecting, it would not lessen her danger from Penrhyn.

Miss Peters was so pleased with her first operation in what was, in one sense at least, high finance, that she took a second flyer—this time to buy seats for the Saturday matinées of Miss Maude Adams's annual revival of "Peter Pan." "That at least is artistic!" she said.

Reminded of the phrase, Wistar again turned it over in his mind, this time with reference to himself. As the weeks went by, steadily healing the

wound in his side, and as steadily diminishing his holdings and increasing those of his enemies, he felt thoroughly the artist in market manipulation. His little turn in the Street had, in fact, netted him many round millions. And far from feeling immoral, as he would have judged himself two years ago, he felt only the elation of skill and power. Perhaps women were not the only ones.

But even luck and skill combined could not maintain the game Wistar was playing forever. There came an end to the resources of the speculative public, and with it an end to Penrhyn's delusion. Prices tumbled and—what is not always the same thing—it seemed likely that values had crumbled.

By this time Wistar was on his feet again. One evening Billy, who had fallen into the way of dining with him at the club, broached the matter of the wedding. It was to be by moonlight on the lawn of the little cottage up on the hills above the Hudson, which was one of the expressions of Mr. Sears's new prosperity; and the rehearsal, a month in advance, was already at hand. May, whom Billy had told little or nothing of the recent course of affairs for fear that he might have to tell her everything, had insisted that Wistar keep his promise to be best man, and to that purpose had postponed the already long-delayed ceremony until his recovery.

Wistar reminded Billy of their business predicament. Only a small fraction of their stock remained, and now, if ever, it was necessary to come out and sell in the open—to make their final assault upon the stronghold of the enemy. It was the grand finish to which they had been working, but the nearer they were to the victory, the more keenly they felt its penalty to them both. "Intending what we intend," Wistar asked, "have I the right to enter so intimate a personal relationship?"

Billy thought a while. "It isn't up to us. It's up to them."

"But Mr. Sears? You know, the last time he failed—he tried to kill himself. How is he taking this present run in?"

Billy became very serious. "You should have seen his face last night. I never saw but one face like it."

"Dejected—crushed?"

"Not just that. It reminded me of a man in college named Riggs. He'd been trying for the varsity eleven three years—crazy about football from a kid, but not quite good enough. His senior year they gave him his chance—end rush. He used to sing and dance all over the dressing rooms. Then a freshman came out—played all round him. Riggs went pale, and the lines came about his mouth. His eyes looked sick. But his nerves only

stiffened, and he played the game of his life." Billy paused.

"So that he kept his position?"

"No. Had to change with the freshman. He broke down—went to pieces—cried like a bull pup all over the place." Tears came to Billy's eyes at the memory.

"A friend of yours?" Wistar asked with sympathy.

"Yes. That is, I was the freshman. Every time I went through him it made me faint and sick. But I had to play the game."

"I stand with you," said Wistar. "and I'll stand up with you!"

CHAPTER XXXV

AT the end of an hour with May at the dressmaker's, Judith sank upon one of the stiff chairs ranged against the wall. The fatigue of standing and stooping, fitting and refitting, had invaded every fiber from the soles of her feet to her brain, and had ended by bringing upon her a sense of detachment—as if her soul were viewing it all, and even herself, from far off in the clear, cold altitudes of interstellar space.

May stood in the center of the room, focus of innumerable mirrors, partly clad in the loose-stitched pieces of what was to be her wedding gown—clear, creamy laces that had been her mother's and grandmother's before her, agreeably contrasting with the softly brilliant modernity of radium silk. Around her stood the neatly clad fitters, ripping out basting thread to pin a seam more tightly, smoothing wrinkles in the bodice, draping long folds in the train. Her youthful vitality and animation, subdued to an intense gravity by the momentousness of the work in hand, had infused itself into the entire group. These supe-

rior young women, whose favorite diversion was to breathe disdain upon the very leaders of the rich and the great, were alive with friendly interest. Even the head of the house had come in from her sanctum to lend a supervising eye. The little assistant, who ran small errands and refilled the pincushions hung at the girdles of the fitters, did so as if performing a beautiful rite; for, behold, among a lifetime of maidens arraying themselves to be married, here was a bride!

Judith saw it all, and saw even more clearly that she herself was bored. From the point of view of interstellar space, what was life, what was love, what was marriage—and, horrid climax of pessimism, *what* was a wedding gown! She was not one of those who take pleasure in looking upon the motley pageant of existence with gelid disdain. Above all in the case of her sister she had meant to be so different! Deep friends they had always been, and for the past year, almost two years now, the exuberant, unquenchable happiness of the one had made an almost pitiful appeal upon the loneliness of the other.

The child had known no mother, and though Judith's own memories of maternal tenderness were far distant, she had caught at every fading incident, warmed it, revivified it, reincarnated it for May—the morning kiss, the embrace of good night, little attentions to her clothes and her good

looks, walks with her by day and long talks with her at bedtime. She had made them all live for herself with a far more poignant tenderness than she had ever felt in the love of their mother; but she could not see that they were matters of moment to her sister. She even contrived at times to leave May alone in her happiness. Yet, though the thought proved quite obviously right, it was quite as obvious that whatever she did or did not do was of no real consequence. Already the girl lived in a different world from hers—the world of sheer, unsentient happiness.

The work on the gown went busily forward, and with it her discontent. In her efforts to share her father's increasing unhappiness she had been even more deeply chagrined. Her knowledge of business told her—what was, indeed, now obvious to the world—that the affairs of the motor combination were in a precarious state, perhaps toppling to a fall. That this meant the loss of their little fortune was the least of her troubles. Always, beneath her deep love for her father, and her rejoicing in the tardy triumph of his ambitions, she knew his weakness, and feared it. And of late the hold she had had on him through their lifelong comradeship had strangely weakened. He no longer admitted her to his confidence, no longer treated her as one who could and would understand.

Who was to blame? Sometimes it seemed to her that it was the man who should have united them more closely—the man who had offered as an evidence of his love for her to make himself her comrade. Since the day of the stormy meeting in her house, when Penrhyn had said in leaving that he would return to tell her everything, he had told her nothing, or next to nothing. She was not by nature suspicious, and least of all in the case of those who were near to her. She had more than her share of the generous womanly instinct to trust them, of the pride that required her to think only the best of them. Yet somewhere something was wrong. Possibly Stanley's silence was the result of the recent stress of affairs—mere procrastination. More likely it was due to some weakness or error of her father's, from the knowledge of which he thought it his duty to shield her. Neither explanation, however, was particularly flattering, for it was her nature—or was it only a foible?—to wish to be indispensable to those she loved. Often she had thought to force their confidence, but her dignity—could it be a subtle distrust?—had always prevented.

And then there was the thought that she was pledged some day to array herself as May was arraying herself now. That raised her boredom to the point of a rebellion against fate.

And Wistar? With the return of prosperity she

had gone out with her father into their old world, and once or twice she had seen him there. Though he had been no more than courteous to her, she had recognized to her surprise, and somewhat to her chagrin, that he was enjoying the world more than she. He had become younger, gayer, more interested, while as for herself—was she really growing old? Certainly she was finding less and less of interest beyond her own walls.

When the fitting was ended, there was a vacant hour before taking the train for the country, and Judith suggested that they go to the Home Stores for tea. The position of managing saleswoman was again vacant, and her interest in it had somehow deepened with her present mood.

It was matinée day, and the room was a babble of girlish enthusiasm. Among all the bright frocks and hats there was only one gray coat, but Judith's eye had no sooner taken in the outlines of the broad back and square shoulders it covered than she saw in her mind's eye, with a little start, almost shock of surprise, a pair of grave eyes and a smile that lurked in the hollows of lean cheeks. Across the table from Wistar was Gerty Minot. Judith took in the situation in a flash. Wistar had at last induced Mrs. Minot to go to the mountains, and with characteristic thoughtfulness was making up to the child for the mother's absence, as well as he could, with a matinée and tea.

The only free table was the one next Wistar's, which had just been vacated, and the attendant led her to it. She felt a moment's repugnance at the enforced encounter, and then a moment of anger with herself for feeling it. Gerty got up, or rather got down, from her chair, with a curious air of being mistress of the situation. She remarked, with a stately little courtesy, that the other table was dreadfully mussy, and invited them to take the vacant seats at Wistar's table. No woman of the world ever met a rival with more polished scorn. Judith spoke a few words to both Gerty and Wistar, but ended by sitting at the mussy table. She was aware as she did so of a slight heightening of color, and she found herself wondering if it would not have shown less self-consciousness if she had accepted the child's invitation—or was it a challenge?

Self-consciousness! Never in her life before had she felt it. To her mind it was the only disgrace, the one unforgivable sin of ingrowing spinsterhood. Yet all afternoon she had wallowed in it.

Wistar betrayed no such concern. His manner toward the child was as attentive, and withal as unaffected, as if she had been the mistress of a salon. Judith remembered that at Gerty's age she had shrank from those who treated her as a child, as most people did, and had adored the rare souls who treated her simply as a human being. This

she saw—she could not help seeing it—was what Wistar was doing now. And the result was that Gerty was beautifully at ease—childlike as children seldom are.

After tea, the waitress brought Gerty an ice, and with it three great meringue kisses. Judith made a brave effort to confine her attention to her conversation with May. But she sat facing the other table, and Gerty's young voice was as penetrating as it was sweet.

"You don't like ices?" the child asked, incredulous at such a defect in taste.

Wistar shook his head.

"Then the kisses are for you," said the child. "Don't eat that," she added, pointing to one of them that had sadly fallen. "They didn't beat it hard enough before baking."

"Beat it?" said Wistar with mannish ignorance. "It looks as if the cook had sat on it!"

Gerty laughed as if this had been the most joyous stroke of wit.

"The other two," Wistar added, "I will give back to you."

Gerty looked at him out of sphinxlike eyes. "One kiss I will take from you," she said. "The other I will give you—from me."

Each took his kiss gravely, and gravely ate it.

Judith looked at the child with frank amazement. Did she mean it as it sounded? Gerty still

had the eyes of a sphinx. She looked at Wistar. Did he know that he was being shamelessly flirted with? There was only the faintest glimmer of a smile on his cheeks. Then for the first time Judith noticed that the odd, intense little face that a year ago had seemed preternaturally old, was taking on lines of regularity and well-being, which, with the luster of her big eyes, the keen sensibility of the mouth, and the intelligence of her smile were making her extraordinarily good to look upon. The most beautiful women, she remembered, have seldom been pretty children.

When Wistar and Gerty got up to go they said a few friendly words. The child, Judith observed, no longer paid her the compliment of even seeming aware of her triumph.

After they had gone, May was the first to speak. "When Gerty is twenty," she said, "Mr. Wistar will be only a little over forty."

Judith answered on the instant. "He will be forty-four!"

A quizzical look came into May's face. "I don't think that too old."

"Some men are never too old. What is it they call them—cradle snatchers?"

May broke into a peal of delighted laughter. "Judy!" she cried. "I positively believe you *care*!"

Judith laughed, too. "I always care," she said.

"But especially about Mr. Wistar!"

"Especially about him. His kind don't happen any more."

"Nonsense! You will never let them!"

"None the less, they don't happen. He is the last of the Mohicans. *And Gerty*!"

It was part of a tacit compact that neither spoke of Penrhyn.

Her principal reason for caring Judith did not mention. Of all the people she had known, men or women, kindred or mere acquaintances, he was the one to whom she had meant most—though the one toward whom she had least thought to be of moment. Her cheeks burned as she remembered how she had once tried to make use of his love for her; and she felt a stinging irony in the fact that now, in the end, he was bringing upon her the bitterest defeat of her lifetime. She liked him as little as ever. He still seemed rigid, unsympathetic, forbidding. But he was bigger, broader, more human than he had been. Some day he would be a great man in the world of great affairs, and it was she who had started him on the way of growth and power.

And herself? She saw herself manager of the tea room, where he came for tea on matinée days with Gerty regularly every week—she was sure he would do everything regularly! Under her *régime* she would see to it that the cook did not sit

on the kisses! The thought recalled his indifference to her, and Gerty's calm superiority. Again the mood of self-consciousness! Her heart rose as she remembered that there was an alternative—that in fact her promise had been given.

They met Penrhyn at the station, and he took the seat next theirs in the train. He had come out for the summer to a country club near them. Things had been going badly that day in the Street, but at sight of her he shook off care and devoted himself with all his vivacity and humor to her amusement. He understood her, believed in the things she believed in, stood ready to bring her everything in life she really cared for. The day of his great success might be delayed by Wistar's conservatism; but, being what he was, in the end it must come. As he had said so often, they were made for each other, and the world was made for them both.

CHAPTER XXXVI

FOR two years Andrews had been living in ease and in enjoyment of the variegated activities of his unstrung emotional nature. But, as the quotations of American Motor fell and tumbled, he saw that the dead line of his margin was increasingly in danger.

Native shrewdness, eked out by his partial knowledge of the inner workings of the company, was not long in putting him in touch with the situation. His first impulse was to curse Penrhyn for his greed and stupidity in pushing Wistar too far, and he yielded to it eloquently. But before long he turned the torrents of invective upon himself. He was possessor of information fatal to the fortunes and good name of two men of wealth and position, and he had used it to no better purpose than to gain a monthly stipend and a few thousand dollars, both of which, if the worst came to the worst, were now in danger. Clearly, he had lacked decision and initiative. Now if ever was the time to redeem his blunder.

Waylaying Penrhyn at his office door he dogged

him to his train at the Grand Central. Before he could engage him in conversation, however, the young financier had ensconced himself in one of the Colonial armchairs in the baggage car supplied to card-playing commuters by an indulgent management, and was beginning a game of bridge.

Penrhyn got off at the station of his country club; but Wistar also, Andrews found, was in the knot of men that alighted from the train. There was something in the man that always brought Andrews as much of shame as he was capable of feeling, and in his brief moment of irresolution Penrhyn chartered the one land-faring hack at the station and drove away up the slope past the club.

Andrews started after it afoot, and, when he reached the highway that skirts the club grounds, saw the vehicle in the distance turning up a road that led to the heights commanding a view of the majestic Hudson. He followed to the turning, and sat down by the roadside. It is the adage of children of the nursery and of Wall Street that what goes up must come down, and when the land-faring hack came down Andrews gave the driver a quarter with an easy air, and in return learned whither he had driven Penrhyn.

Half an hour later he labored up a flight of stone steps that led from the road to the grounds of a little summer cottage, which from its lordly altitude commanded the full sweep of the river,

thirty miles and more to the Statue of Liberty trying hard to enlighten New York. Mounting the ivied veranda, he pressed the button at the door, and, as he waited, turned and encompassed the view with an eloquent sweep of his hand.

In the ancient serving woman who answered his ring he recognized Mrs. Boyser. "Tell Mr. Penrhyn," he said with admirable poise, "that a gentleman here wants to see him on business."

"Begging your pardon," the old woman answered with a no less admirable circumspection, "is the gentleman you?"

Andrews clouded. "I won't stand for none of your guff," he said.

"No offense intended. May I ask what is your business?"

"Say it's his ice bill."

The old woman hesitated, and then went in. Andrews turned, and, his eye lighting on a rustic seat that encircled an old elm in the lawn, he sat on it with a determined air.

"Damn your impudence!" said Penrhyn, coming down the steps with resolute strides.

He was in dinner dress, and the sight of his broad shirt front awed Andrews for a moment. But it was only for a moment. "Same to you," he vouchsafed without rising. "What I want to know is what's all this monkey tricks in the Street?"

Penrhyn paused the fraction of a second, and then, "Only a little flurry," he ventured.

"Flurry? Less than a week ago my shares was worth big dollars. Three days more o' the same and they won't be worth doughnuts."

"Well, suppose you do get it in the neck?"

Andrews surveyed him coolly. "No danger to my neck! Two years ago Wistar asked me who bribed me to crack his safe. Suppose I go and tell him, heigh?"

Penrhyn smiled carelessly. "I wouldn't take the trouble."

"'Cause why?"

"He knows."

Andrews gave a start of surprise, more convincing perhaps than if it had been altogether genuine. "Wistar is on it was you?"

Penrhyn's smile broadened, though not with geniality. "Your blackmailing graft is played out." Then he took on a threatening tone. "If you don't get out of here and stay out, I give you fair warning, it's off the ice wagon for you, and onto the water wagon. Are you on?"

Andrews relapsed against the tree with thoughtful satisfaction. "Just what I wanted to make sure of—what raised such a row." Then he leaned forward, held out his open palm, and with a few telling strokes outlined the course of recent events.

Penrhyn looked ugly. It was not a pleasant

way to be reminded of his past blunder and his present plight.

"Who did you say got it in the neck?" Andrews triumphed. "Clever stock juggler, Wistar, spite of all his chesty nonsense about trusts."

It took only a moment for Penrhyn to regain control of himself. "You're off," he said nonchalantly, "way, way off!"

"Am I? Then why is it worth your while to interrupt your supper and pass the time o' day with a poor workingman? Why is Wistar selling out? 'Cause he's bolting to join Minot and the rest of the independents to smash the trust." As he spoke he watched Penrhyn's face narrowly. "Between Wistar and this here Eu-*ro*-peen combine, they'll sock it to youse, both goin' and comin'!" He took from his pocket the certificate of his stock. "In six weeks this here won't be worth the paper it's printed onto. I'm on—way, way on! I've got the reason why!"

Penrhyn answered with jocular indulgence. "Then you know what you could get cold thousands for on the Street. All you've got is cold feet. If you're afraid the slump is going any farther, I'll advance you a few hundred on your ice bill to tide you over."

"So, after all, my graft isn't *quite* played out, heigh?" Andrews laughed. "You want me to wait till you've busted Wistar. And where'll I be

if he busts you? Work all the week, and preaching in Madison Square to drown the hot coppers in my gullet! *I* guess *nit*! I know both o' you, and the man gives me cold feet is Wistar. It's up to you to give me the cold thousands for these here shares." He paused a moment, and then concluded with resolution: "Unless you fork over, here and now, I tell what I know to my broker. See?"

"Believe you—a jail bird?"

Penrhyn's tone was still jocular and indulgent; but the striped suit is not a jest to those who have been inside it. "None o' your insults!" Andrews cried. "Suppose I agree to sell that story to the newspapers? You and the old man traitors and thieves! My broker could go short and make thousands! Your game and the old man's reputation knocked higher than a kite, heigh?" His resentment spent, he paused, and watched Penrhyn's face with intense cunning. "The mere price o' the shares is a song. Give me five thousand dollars for 'em, or I peach to-morrow!"

Penrhyn did not speak.

Andrews saw his opportunity. Thrusting the certificate into his pocket, he strode toward the gate. "Good-by," he said, over his shoulder. "I hate to do you dirt, Penrhyn, but you've had your chanct."

"Wait a minute!" Penrhyn called after him,

alarm overcoming his inward rage. "I haven't the money here. What do you want me to give you? A check?"

"Why not? You're in the mud as deep as me. Only, not to be promiscuous with my signature, you'll have to cash it for me in the morning, and let me tear it up."

Glancing about to make sure they were alone, Penrhyn took out a pen and a check book and wrote.

"That's the ticket for soup!" Andrews applauded.

"Wait a minute!" Penrhyn said. "I'm getting tired of that little matter of the ice bill." He held out the check to the other's view. "I'll give you another thousand in the morning if you'll sign some little papers that will close the books between us."

Andrews thought a moment. Now that Wistar had learned the truth his secret was clearly of value only in a crisis like the present. "Sure, Mike!" he concluded. As he pocketed the check he smiled complacently. At the outset he had been amazed at Penrhyn's amateurish neglect in failing to protect himself against blackmail. "The trouble with you, Penrhyn," he said, "is that you haven't quite got your hand in at this sort of thing. What's that the poet says? 'Oh, 'tis a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive.' But when we've

done it onct or twice, we learn the trick that cuts the ice."

As Andrews was turning to go, Boyser came out and announced that coffee was served in the library.

Seeing her, Andrews dug his heel in the turf and swung about.

"I ain't had my supper yet," he said in a low voice to Penrhyn. "Her nibs here wanted to know just now if I was a gentleman. When this sort of thing passes between gentlemen, they gen'lly wet it, don't they?"

In another minute the entire party would be sitting behind the open windows of the porch, if they were not already there. It was not the time to stand between a dog and his bone, and Penrhyn could not hustle Andrews away without attracting notice. "Oh, Boyser," he said, "here's a man who has brought me a message from town. Give him a bite in the kitchen, and let him out the back gate." He offered her a bill, but she turned her eyes from it, and, coming out on the lawn, led Andrews about the house to the back door.

"None o' your little nips, Missis," Andrews said, cheerfully. "I hoofed it all the way from the deepoe. What I want is a square five fingers."

As he disappeared in the shrubbery, Judith came out on the veranda, with a dubious glance at

Penrhyn: "Andrews!" she said. "Here—with you?"

It was a matter of months since he promised her an account of the situation. From day to day he had intended to make what explanation he could. He had it on the tip of his tongue. But no one was more conscious of its inadequacy than he, and there was something in the clear rectitude of her mind that had kept the words unspoken. Now a thing had happened which put him almost hopelessly on the defensive.

"The bad penny," he said. "You know the proverb."

"'The proverb is somewhat musty,'" she quoted, looking him gently in the eyes. "You have asked me to give up forever the hope of love," she added, laying her two hands on his shoulders. "Be sure what you offer is true comradeship."

"As for Andrews, he's been speculating in our stock in a small way, and his margin is in danger. He followed me up here to get a tip." She was silent. "Of course, I couldn't advise him; but he's a poor devil, and I gave him enough money to buy him a meal and a bed till he can get work again."

Still she was silent, and he felt impelled to go on:

"As for Wistar, what he wants is you. It was to please you he came in with us, giving up his

principles, about which he talked so loudly. And now that has failed, he has made this grand-stand play to save Minot, in the hope of impressing you and discrediting me."

"That is not like him. Are you quite fair? How can it be right to ruin Mr. Minot in cold blood?"

"Ah, that's the question I've feared! The question that I've hesitated, all these weeks, to take up with you! You know something of evolution in biology. The same laws operate in society and business. Minot is one of the unfit." As they were talking she had passed to a bed of roses that lay along an old stone wall by the roadside, and was now plucking a cluster to carry into the house. "When these first began to bud," he said, "I saw you cutting off the small early buds—to make these larger and more beautiful."

"It's a very pretty simile for a very ugly thing. And Mr. Wistar—is he also one of the unfit?" She smiled at him, at once subtly and frankly.

"When he takes sides with Minot he becomes so! It lies in our power to develop this industry like the American Beauty rose—to meet our foreign rivals, even to beat them. Progress by the death of the unfit—if any man had invented it, it would be called murder and greed! But it was ordained by a power as much greater than our own as it is unknowable. All we can be sure of

is that it is the only means by which the wise and strong survive. These are your father's ideas, and I count it an honor to be associated with him in realizing them."

She glanced at him ruefully and shrugged her shoulders. "But there's always the question—just who are the unfit? I don't think you feel as fit as you did a month ago. The old look has come back into father's eyes. For myself, I feel as if I had hung up for weeks like a suit of clothes in a Bowery misfit shop. What does it all mean?"

Penrhyn's face became hard and set, but when he spoke it was with courage and conviction. "It looks now as if Wistar intended to join Minot in his fight against us. It will be a hard fight and a long one. But we are right and we are stronger. In the end we shall win!"

"For father's sake, I hope so. But I am sorry, very sorry, that you waited to tell me all this until matters have come to such a pass."

She started toward the house with the flowers, and was met at the door by Boyser.

"That man, in the kitchen," the old woman said, "he's drinking up the whole bottle and insultin' of Mary."

By this time Penrhyn was not in a pleasant mood. "I'll settle him!" he said, between his teeth, striding toward the back door.

"Wait, Stanley!" Judith cried after him.

Penrhyn stopped short. "Is it quite the place for you?"

"I am the mistress of the house," she said. "In this matter you might at least consult me." Then, as if to soften the rebuke, she added: "Don't you think it will be easier for me to shame him into behaving? If not, then you can use stronger measures."

CHAPTER XXXVII

IT was the evening of the wedding rehearsal; but as Mr. Sears sat in the library sipping his coffee, even the eager and light-hearted May became aware that he was in no cheerful mood. With the imperfect sympathy of girlhood, she tried to gladden him by talking of the event that to her was all-important and all-joyful; but his response, she found, was not all the subject deserved. Even Onderdonk was glum. Slipping her arm into his, she led him out of doors.

"What is it all about?" she asked. "If I had stayed in there another second I should have been stifled!"

"A little business worry," he said, fingering his unlighted cigar.

She looked at him reproachfully. "Remember! We're to share everything, troubles as well as happiness, little and big!"

In their long engagement Billy had learned to play a good husbandlike hand at affectionate dissimulation. "Stocks are down," he said, as if imparting a secret of state.

"But aren't they always going up and down? Isn't that what they're made for?"

"You're right there!" said Billy.

"Well then, you might be just a little cheerful for my wedding rehearsal!"

He laid an arm about her shoulder.

She slipped away from him, and, with an enraptured glance at the heavens, "What a perfectly lovely night!" she rejoiced. "I *do* hope our day will be like this!"

Beyond the distant Palisades the sun had set in splendor. Upon the verdure-covered crags beneath the western heavens a crimson mantle had fallen, like the bloom of a damask plum. The broad waters of the river, heaving with long, dead swells from the southeast, reflected and mingled in a web of exquisite variegation, delicate mauve from the sunset and clear green from the sky overhead. The full moon rose in the east over the Pocantico hills, and down from it a pale but increasing radiance filtered upon the whole broad landscape.

"It certainly is a corker!" said Billy, sitting on the bench beneath the tree.

May slapped a mosquito on her delicately modeled and athletic forearm.

"Come along," Billy said, starting toward an arbor on a knoll out beyond, "I'll smoke up and drive away the mosquitoes."

But May did not go, for just then the silken purr of a motor stole up through the gathering dusk from the sunken road beneath them, and presently Wistar mounted the stone steps. He wore a dinner jacket and straw hat, and held a cream-white motor coat over his arm.

May blew him a delighted kiss. "Now we're all ready!" she said, and ran into the house.

"Any news from the Street?" asked Billy. Even when he had left the office to catch an early train everybody was talking Motor, and he had run a gantlet of reporters.

"The same, only more so. And they're having no end of trouble with that plunge in rubber. It looks now as if it were off."

According to Wistar's reports from South America, Ryan and his associates were throwing down their hands in disgust. It is one thing to buy a Latin-American republic, and another to make it stay bought. Wistar had done his best to noise abroad the rumor of the proposed monopoly, and the effect was what he had planned. Already in two cases the very men who had profited by the sale of a concession had headed revolutions against their own government for the purpose of capturing it and selling the concession again. The great rivers of the rubber countries were bordered with quicksands for the sinking of American millions.

"If we keep to our plan," Wistar concluded,

" we shall have to come out in the open to-morrow and sell to bust them. Are you still game? "

" Still game. And you? "

" I should like to put it up to Mr. Sears once more."

The door opened, and May came out, leading her father by the hand. " Where do you think Judy is? " she cried. " In the kitchen, arguing and persuading with a tipsy tramp. Wait just a minute till I get her! " And she vanished into the house.

" Can you leave us? " Wistar said in a low voice to Billy.

Billy started to follow May, but with a glance at his cigar he lighted it, and, thrusting his hands in the pockets of his dinner jacket, turned on his heel toward the arbor.

The two men faced each other. The lines about the old gentleman's clear-cut and delicate lips were drawn and haggard. The soft wrinkle that once had pleasantly framed his refined and pointed chin had become a furrow, and his mild blue eyes were without expression.

But it was he who spoke first. " Your promise not to tell Judith," he said, in a dry metallic voice —" you have kept it, and I thank you. You have fought hard, but you have fought fair."

" Did I promise? " Wistar asked. " I'd forgotten." The fact that Mr. Sears had treasured

such a promise would have seemed contemptible if it had not been pitiable. Two years ago he would have known that there was no need of such a pledge.

"All the more," Sears said, "I thank you for sparing her."

"Sparing her?" Wistar cried. "Do you realize what it is costing her—what life will mean to such a woman, married to such a man!"

A look of surprise came into the pale old face, and with it a look of terror. "She can't care for him!"

"She has told me that she does! I have no right to warn her. But you have. More than that, if you will permit me to say so, it is your duty!"

The old face became tense with pain, but at the same time set with obstinacy.

For a moment Wistar regarded him with unmingled scorn. Then he commanded himself, and delivered his ultimatum and Billy's. Another day would see the ruin of all Mr. Sears had hoped for, striven for.

"Billy would do that!"

"He insists on it. Once your sole aid was all we needed. I asked you for it, and you refused it. So it has come to this."

In the pause that followed, May led Judith and Penrhyn out to join them.

From time to time Sears had been mechanically brushing the mosquitoes from their attacks on his delicate skin—a gesture which to Wistar's mind had lent a not inappropriate touch of triviality to his figure. Now he made an excuse of the pests to go indoors, and with a low spoken word bade Penrhyn to follow. Wistar could not help hoping that his words had had weight.

"Poor father!" said Judith, as she gave Wistar her hand. "He got all the people in the country round to combine in a trust against the mosquitoes. But there's one obstinate farmer won't let us put a drop of kerosene on his marsh. Our neighbors over on the Pocantico hills—Standard Oil, you know!—they've tried to bully him into selling his land, and he's using the mosquitoes from his marsh to get even. Another of father's poor syndicates bust!"

They laughed, with what gayety they could command.

"It's worse than pigs in clover," May complained, "to get you all together. Now where's the Bishop to stand?" She took up a garden rake, and stuck it upright in the bed of roses. "There," she said; "that's the Bishop!"

"That!" laughed Wistar. "The good Bishop a rake! You slander the Subway Tavern!" Taking his overcoat from the bench, he draped it over the head of the rake, and then paused, a smile

beaming in the hollow of his cheek. "Yet we need just a *soupçon* of the rake!" He spread the collar so that the teeth were visible. "There!" he said. "No! Wait!" He picked up a flower pot and perched it on top. "There you have the Bishop to the life! Now we *shall* be married!"

"First," said Judith, looking mysteriously at a card in her hand, "I think we'd better be invited! The engravers have just sent this back to know if it's all right."

May looked at the card with a critical eye. "Of course it's all right. I wrote it out myself! 'The wedding of his daughter, May Honoria Rhinelander, at Suncliff, Ardsley-on-Hudson'—I think it reads beautifully!"

Judith looked over her shoulder. "Is it your idea that at a wedding a groom is superfluous?"

"I clean forgot to put Billy in! That's why they sent it back!" She took a pencil Wistar offered her and scribbled in, "to William Van Rensselaer Onderdonk." Then she ran up the steps and called, "Come, father! Come, Mr. Penrhyn! Everything's ready!"

"Is *everything* ready?" asked Wistar.

"Except the cup, and Boyser is mixing that!"

"And the music—I brought it from town with me; it will be here in a minute. And is that everything?"

"Music? How *sweet* of you! It's more than

I dreamed! You regular lambkin pie!" She leaped lightly up on her toes and kissed him on the lips.

With his two hands on her shoulders he held her on tiptoe a moment. "Now I agree with you," he said. "At a wedding a groom *is* superfluous!"

"Billy? Isn't he here? I *know* Donkey will spoil my wedding! Where did he go!"

"He seems to be aware how superfluous he is," Wistar laughed. "Perhaps you'll find him out in the arbor, smoking!"

She stood still, half afraid to leave them. "Until I come back, don't you dare stir from this spot!" Then, with her lithe, girlish stride, she fled toward the arbor.

"We'll call you," Wistar cried after her, "when the music comes!"

Then he turned to Judith, and in the moment his mask of gay spirits fell from him.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

JUDITH smiled at him a little sadly. "It pleases my lord to be merry! Very soon, now, they say, you will stand alone again and fighting against us, as you were before we came meddling by. You expect to win?"

"Unfortunately, I do!"

"Unfortunately?"

"Times have changed—and I with them. Oh! I have learned something. The things I have been able to do, and the vastly greater things I have come to hope for—they make my old ambitions seem petty enough. I have known the strength and security of well-regulated industry and I have to go back to the old, haphazard conditions. Worse than that, I am driven to violence. Day and night I think of you—in poverty!—of myself, when I have brought you there."

The crimson of the sunset had deepened to purple, and now the twilight was rising from the valleys like a mist, dim and mysterious, in the increasing effulgence of the moon.

From the road below them came low, guttural

voices, and presently the musicians panted up the steps toward them, carrying their instruments beneath their arms.

"A lidtle mooseek, poss?" asked the leader, puffing.

Wistar distrusted German bands. "Yes," he said, "but don't make a racket."

"Racket! And sooch an effening!" He disposed his men at a distance in the shrubbery, and struck up an old, soft evening song—so poetically, so exquisitely attuned to the moment that it seemed like the very atmosphere transmuted to sound.

Judith had passed to the bed of roses, and her long, agile fingers were busy among them. The perfume from them seemed to Wistar the perfect attar of the hour, and of her.

"What would you think," he said, "if to spare you I were to join them in ruining Minot?"

She did not cease plying her fingers. "That you cared for me very much," she said.

"And now you think——?"

She glanced up at him archly, yet sadly. "What do you suppose?"

"I am a man, and I am striking at those you love best—at you!"

"And I am a woman! If I choose not to say what I think?"

"You told me once—the cave man, brutal and merciless!"

She looked at him, wavering between her old fear and a new audacity. Audacity conquered. She plucked a rose and, standing straight beneath his chin, guided the stem through the loop in his lapel, her draperies brushing his coat.

Once, in an impulse of generous sympathy for Minot, she had laid her hand on his shoulder, and even then he had put her away from him in fear. Now she was personal, captious, provocative. She stood tiptoe on the brink of his love for her—the love that for years had been his whole life—and blew a kiss down into the abyss of it. His strong arm trembled to the shoulder, and his knees shook beneath him. His clearer senses, his habitual self-control, melted like frost before fire. In another moment she must have known the fate she was braving. But in a moment her coquetry vanished in an outburst of comradely good will.

"No! Not brutal, not merciless! Poor father—I have always loved him above everything else in the world. But to save him by making you false to what you hold right—by making you ruin your friend, my friend—you have not offered to do that for me, and I thank you! Blow after blow, as it falls, it will be terrible—terrible to feel your hand in it all! Yet I shall not blame you!" She gave him both hands, impulsively.

The passion of the blood faded before the

mightier passion of the spirit. He took her hands, and looked down into her eyes, shining with moonlight and with tears. "You are a woman!" he said, his voice vibrating like a viol. "Always I shall love you! For your justice and your honor, for your grace, your beauty, for your loyal heart! Miserable as I am, more miserable as I shall be, it means much that with every thought, every feeling—I don't use the word lightly—I worship you!" His voice choked, but he presently managed to say: "You forgive me for telling you this?—It is our last hour!"

"If you are so determined to say good-by——"

"Can I bear to see you happy—happy with Penrhyn!"

"It seems I'm not to be happy!"

"Then Heaven help me—if my path crosses yours!"

"What I meant was that—since you are determined to say good-by—you'll have to let go my hands!"

He looked down at her palms which he held as a child might hold them. Then he blushed like a child, and let them fall.

"Bugaboo!" she laughed. "To think I ever was afraid of you! You great big bear! You huge boy! Hasn't anyone ever called you Jim?"

He shook his head. "I once told you—I'm a very serious person."

"If it will make you any less serious, I'll call you Jim."

"Then it is good-by—Judith!"

Somehow he had got hold of her hands again. Mockingly she lifted their united palms between them, and held them up to his gaze. He loosened his grasp, and her fingers slipped gently out of his.

She stood a moment, as if not quite knowing what to do with them. Then, with a sudden impulse, she caught the tips of his ears and drew down his head until his cheek lay upon hers.

"Good-by, Jim," she said. Then she laughed and added the rest of the poetical line: "'Take keer of yourself.'" What she might mean by this she did not make known, but fled from him, and paused only when she had passed out beyond the musicians toward the arbor. Then "May! May!" she called, and her voice rang clear and gay through the twilight. "Don't you hear?—The music!"

Sears and Penrhyn came out and joined her.

"They don't hear!" she said, still on the wings of wilding gayety. "Look at them! Or rather don't look!" She took first Penrhyn and then Wistar by the shoulder and swung them about. "Daddy! Will you get them? In such cases, I believe, it is always the stern parent who intrudes."

"Why intrude?" said Wistar. "Isn't that the

most important rehearsal of all? Let them be happy in it—music, moonlight, love!"

"Right you are!" said Penrhyn. "Come, everybody; we'll do the rehearsing for them!" He took Judith by the arm. "You are the bride," he said, and led her up to the rakish Bishop. Turning to Wistar: "The best man, I believe," he said. "Mr. Sears, you give Judith away!" Then he bade the musicians play the wedding march.

The measured strains rose softly on the still air. Penrhyn took his stand beside Wistar, and Judith, taking her father's arm, stepped lightly toward them, mocking the conscious demureness of a bride. Then she joined Penrhyn, and stood with him as if before the altar.

Wistar fixed his eyes upon Sears, and then on the bridal pair. "There you see it!" he said, with vehemence suppressed: "the end of your unholy alliance! She has a sense of honor like a man. You *can't* make her suffer what she will suffer with that—" He fell silent; but his fingers, clinched behind his back, contorted with agony.

"Don't!" pleaded Sears, his face haggard and ashen.

"There is one way to prevent it!"

The old man shook his head and turned away.

A ghostlike form sped toward them from the arbor. "Stop, stop!" May cried. "How horrid of you! This is *my* wedding!"

Peals of musical laughter fell upon the spacious evening air, and Penrhyn shouted for a waltz. With the first measure he seized Judith, and together they glided over the even turf. As they passed Wistar she swung free and held out her arms to him.

He caught her, but, as he did so, he stopped short.

Over the wall by the roadside Andrews had raised his pale face, spiritual in the moonlight. Even his brick-red side whiskers shone with the mellower hues of stained glass. Slowly and unsteadily he clambered up, until he stood on the wall. With one arm he clutched a maple sapling, and swept the other before him to command silence.

The little party stood dumb.

" Ladies 'n' genulums," he said in a voice which, though husky with drink, was all the more ghostlike and awful. " I'm not the handwriting on the wall. I'm a voice up a tree! You're all weighted in the balances, and all found wanting."

CHAPTER XXXIX

IT was Penrhyn who first found words. "Down out of that!" he cried, at once alarmed and angry. "Get down, or I'll throw you down!" He strode toward the wall to make good his threat.

Wistar caught his wrist in a grip of steel. "You can't bully him," he said. "I know the man! You've got to humor him or he'll be violent." Then: "Come down out of that!" he commanded.

Andrews turned his eyes in hazy recognition: "Old Wistar, is it? I know I'm drunk; but that don't prevent me seein' a hole through you! You an honest man? You make me tired! You a trust-buster? 'Long came the trust, and gobbled you up like a pop fly at short stop. In two shakes, James Wistar, trust-buster, was the ablest trust-manager in these United States. Then what happened? You want to be the whole shebang! Penrhyn won't let you, so now you're crying baby. Going home to slide on your own cellar door, heigh? Shame on you, Wistar!"

Penrhyn, at first relieved, now became jubilant. "Hear, hear!" he cried.

Andrews swept the company with a watery eye. "Trusts is all right, genulums! Us laboring men got our trusts—that's the unions. Why shouldn't youse have yourn? Fair play 'n' no favors, I say!"

"You're quite right," Wistar said, "but that'll be enough from you, Andrews."

"No! No!" cried Penrhyn. "More! More!"

Andrews warmed to his audience. "Wistar is a good man," he said. "Trouble with his goodness is that it's the kind that don't pay. Now there's our neighbor on the other hill there. Wistar ought to go to Sunday school to little Johnny Rockefeller. There's the boy that understands the blessings of the trust! Trust eats up its rivals? No matter, sezze. 'Mur'can Beauty rose never could 'a' been so big and beautiful if they hadn't cut off the little buds to make the big ones grow bigger."

At this citation of the author of the elegant simile Judith's eyes opened, and she looked inquiringly at Penrhyn.

"See, genulums! Never could 'a' been so beautiful, and not half so damn 'Mur'can. 'Mur'can Beauty rose—that's the trusts. Little buds—that's the independent makers. Snip 'em off! Snip 'em off!"

A glance from Judith had taught Penrhyn caution. Andrews knew that Wistar was undeceived;

but he could not know that there was another whom it was even more important to keep in the dark.

"Cut it out!" Penrhyn cried, again savagely domineering. "Cut it out, I say!"

"You can't turn him off," Wistar said. "The quickest way is to let him run down. Highly instructive, I find him."

"Wistar ought 'a' gone to Sunday school. Then he would 'a' learned that the man who tries to do good to hisself without doin' the trade as a whole—" Andrews broke off in fuddled perplexity. "I mean, doin' the trade as a whole—good! . . . What was I sayin', genulums? You know what I mean, Penrhyn. You're the man to do the trade, and do it good!"

This time Penrhyn strode past Wistar and reached the wall.

Andrews clasped the tree in both arms. "What you got to say about it, Penrhyn? You're a slick one! Wanted to get Wistar into the trust. How did you go to work?"

Penrhyn caught hold of him, but was not able to budge him from the tree.

Andrews burst into injured tears. "You bribed a poor weak workingman to crack Wistar's safe and steal his papers! Was that right to me, I ask? Make me rob him as was allus my friend!"

Penrhyn stood back as if struck by a blow. For

a moment there was silence—a silence so deep that the chirping of crickets was heard.

"Is this true?" Judith said, looking from Penrhyn to her father, and then to Wistar. The only answer was from the crickets, querulous and accusing.

Seeing the consternation he had caused, Andrews came to Penrhyn's defense.

"But *I* don't blame him! It's all been for the good of the industry. When hist'ry of aut'mobile is written, it'll be un'versally 'knowl'g't Stanley Penrhyn an' Livingston Sears put the world on wheels!" His ideas scattered; but after a moment's blankness he went on in an explanatory vein: "The old one has the ideas, and looks so tony they think him good as pie, and he smiles in his sleeve while the young un does the crooked business."

Wistar's voice rose with the tones of authority: "Andrews!" he thundered. "Come down!"

The man limply obeyed. "I'm comin'!" he said. "I don't want to be no skeleton at no feast! Here they are, marryin' an' givin' in marriage!" His eyes fell on the effigy of the Bishop, and he focused them with a quizzical leer, half abashed in fear, half humorous in comprehension, as a wise old crow might regard a straw man. He took an empty sleeve in his hand. "But it's a bad job, your riverence. If you'll pardon a plain man,

she's too good for Penrhyn, she is. It should 'a' been the other one!" He shook his head solemnly. "Them two have been friends—real friends o' mine!" By this time Wistar had him by the wrist. Andrews laid his head on his shoulder and sobbed with emotion uncontrollable. "Only two friends I have in this world are Miss Wears an' Mr. Sister!"

"Come!" said Wistar, "I'll take you to the train."

"Leave me go home alone!" Andrews protested. "I'm used to being drunk—take care o' myself better drunk 'n' sober. When I'm sober, I allus go an' get drunk." He freed himself, and, commanding the idiosyncrasies of his legs, walked erect and firm toward the gate. Halfway down the steps he turned. "Good-by, Penrhyn," he said. "You went to Sunday school!"

Wistar, leaning over the wall, saw him walk down the road, still straight and firm.

The thing which, from all motives, Wistar had so long and so passionately desired to have Judith know was now an open secret. Judith's loyalty to Penrhyn, if she remained loyal, would not be blind.

A sudden blight had fallen on the company, in which above everything Wistar felt an old man's disgrace before his children, a young woman's disillusionment in those she loved.

CHAPTER XL

IT was Wistar who broke the spell that had fallen on the company. "I believe we owe you a rehearsal," he said to May and Billy. "Shall we begin?"

"No, no!" Sears cried. "Not now!"

Wistar dismissed the musicians, mystified spectators of the scene, bidding them keep an eye on Andrews. Boyser came out from the house with the cup she had been mixing, poured out a glass, and offered it to each of the party in turn. One after another they refused it in silence.

"Is this the truth?" Judith asked Penrhyn.

"Yes," he said sullenly. Then he turned to Boyser. "Kindly pack my bag. I'll send for it from the club." He started toward the gate. As he passed Wistar his sullen humor lighted with a flash of anger. "You've got me down here," he said. "But I'm not out—not by a long shot. There's many a turn in Wall Street!"

"It is, I am aware, a very crooked street!" Wistar turned away.

Penrhyn raised his chin defiantly. But as he did so his glance met Judith's, and his eyes fell.

She gave him her hand. "I'm not angry," she said. "I don't know why, but I am not. I'm very, very sorry for you. What you have threatened—you won't do it! You will keep your promise to him—our promise!"

As Penrhyn gazed at her, and heard the clear, kind cadence of her voice, a look came into his face which Wistar had never seen there before, and in which, in a flash, he read the secret of Judith's regard for the man. "If I promised to keep my word," Penrhyn said, and there was a real contrition in his voice, "I should not be believed, nor deserve to be. But I will keep *your* promise." He turned again to Wistar. "I don't ask you to believe even that. I may point out, however, that I have the same reason as always to want to hold you together with the rest of us. Once I thought I was clever enough to get the best of you—clever enough, and strong enough, and mean enough. I've done things I never dreamed I could; but I've reached the limit of my dirty work, and I guess I've reached the limit of my power. If you still wish to honor me as an associate I shall stand with you and by you!"

Without waiting for an answer he left them.

Judith turned an accusing glance upon Sears.

"Father!" she said, "you have lied to me!"

When Sears had heard the words in which his

young associate renounced him he had hung his head. Now he lifted a face that was, in fact, too painful to be seen.

"It was for you, dearie!—to save you from want! I couldn't believe you cared for him!"

"For *me*? To *lie*!"

"Your pardon," said Wistar. "Good night!" It was clearly not a scene for anyone to witness. And Judith's manner toward Sears, so strangely in contrast with her leniency to Penrhyn, made him sick at heart. "No, no!" Judith cried. "Wait!" She turned to Sears. "What Mr. Wistar has done has been just and right from the start! Own up, Daddy, dear. It has!"

A hunted look came into the gentle, aging eyes.

"What must he think of us! What must we think of ourselves!"

The old man's hands shook, and he sank upon the bench, abashed, crushed. "I know! You loathe me! And I loathe myself! I wronged him. I ask his pardon. One more dream and it is all over. But before, at the awakening, I still had my honor—and your love."

Tears came into Judith's eyes and into her voice. "Oh, Daddy! How you must have suffered! I do love you—shall always love you! *How* I love you!"

May, who had stood amazed but uncomprehen-

sive by Onderdonk's side, now knelt and caught the old man in her arms.

He struggled to his feet, leaned over and kissed her. "Good night, child! Billy is the best fellow in the world. You will be happy."

He said no more, and presently Onderdonk led May away.

"Good night, Judith. Believe me, sweetheart, you will learn to thank God you know what Penrhyn is, though it breaks your heart. That is my greatest sin, that I ever let you care for him!" He spoke like one on the verge of the grave.

"We shall still be happy!" Judith pleaded. "For you as well as for me, everything is *so* much better as it is!"

"I am an old man. Kiss me good night."

Impulsively she threw her arms about him.

He smiled a faint, wan smile. "The eyes!" he said.

Joy lighted her face. "Bless you, dearest! Now I *know* I can make you happy!" She kissed him on the drooping lids.

"Your mother—she is with us now! Yes, I shall be happy!"

In sudden alarm she stood back from him. "Father! *What* are you thinking of?"

With an instinctive movement he thrust his hand into the pocket of his dinner jacket. But

her hand was as quick. She gripped his wrist and held it firm.

Wistar clutched the revolver and wrenched it away.

The old man winced with pain. "You hurt my shoulder!" he complained.

"Your shoulder!" Judith cried. "Again, Daddy, *again*!"

He turned upon Wistar. "You have taken everything else," he said. "Give me that! My life is still my own!"

"Father!" said Judith tenderly.

"If a poor cur on the street were sick, sick to death, you would kill him—kill him in mercy! Yet your father you condemn to live—to live in poverty, defeat, disgraced in the eyes of those he loves!"

"Father!" she repeated, her voice melting with love.

"You are right, dear," he said. "I must be brave. I will be brave!" Then he turned from them and went indoors.

Judith started after, but Wistar caught and held her. "Believe me!" he said. "It is not as it seems! It was my fault! If I had known what I know now, it never would have happened. I want you to tell him so, from me—tell him that I see my fault, and stand ready to join him—under the terms Penrhyn has offered."

"You can do this—without violating your sense of what is right? May I tell him that? Do be quick! My place is there, with him!"

"Once when I promised this it *was* against my conscience. In the old days I was the cave man, blind to the new ideas. Your father understood them. Little by little I have learned from experience what no argument could convince me of—his largeness and his wisdom. What we have accomplished, his genius foresaw it all! He may be weak—Penrhyn was masterful and played on every foible. But in his mind and his heart he is right!"

Already she had left him. With a single flash his darkest hour had turned to the most glorious dawn. The suddenness and the vastness of the prospect before him dazed him, even while it filled him with confidence and joy.

Then, from within the house, a loud cry fell upon his ears, a wail of anguish and horror that stabbed him like a knife in his heart. When it was repeated he had gained the door and was mounting the stairs within. In another second a sight burst upon him which he was destined never to forget. Judith lay prostrate and convulsed upon the form of her father, still writhing in a pool of blood. Through the window the full moon shone, and upon her hair, faintly golden, was a crimson blot.

CHAPTER XLI

WISTAR gathered her in his arms and, heedless of tears and protestations, carried her downstairs and into the open air. When he released her she looked at him once, then shrank away in horror and loathing. The handkerchief with which he had cleansed her hair was still crumpled in his hand.

"Let me go back to him!" she commanded harshly. "Never let me see you again!"

He recoiled, yet still blocked the way. Out of the shadows May hurried toward them, and Onderdonk with her.

"Father—is it father?" she cried.

A new horror fell upon Judith.

Wistar bowed his head.

"He is dead?" The young girl scanned each face in turn.

Judith was mute, and Wistar still bowed his head.

"Did you say dead? Oh, Billy!" But even as she cried out, her voice was of one who did not understand. "Dead?" she asked blankly.

"My daddy?" Then she sprang toward the veranda.

It was Judith who caught her. "No, no! Not yet! It is too terrible!"

For a moment the sisters stood sobbing in each other's arms. Then May freed herself, and with incoherent cries, turned from Judith and sank upon Onderdonk's shoulder. The young man held her a moment, and presently led her away, dazed and unresisting.

Judith stood alone. Again she tried to pass Wistar, yet shrank from him as she did so. Again he barred the way. "I can only protect you," he said, "as you protected her."

"I must go! I can't stay alone—alone!" Then again she looked at him, shuddering. "Leave me with him!" she sobbed. "Let me never see you again!"

He desired nothing more than to go; but he stood to his post, and Mrs. Boyser abetted him, bringing rugs and cushions and wraps. She spread them on the grass, and forced Judith to lie down on them. Then she disappeared, and Wistar heard her at the telephone, summoning the needful aid.

Judith turned her face from him and lay on the ground, outbursts of grief followed by still more agonized moments of grief, silent and restrained. And so a night began, the horror of which left a lifelong mark on all of them.

A breeze came, and with it coolness and the freshness of the sea. The moon floated above with a serene, unsentient beauty that fell upon Wistar's heart like a blight. By and by, something bade him look at the window above. All his efforts to resist it failed, and he raised his eyes. The shade had been decently drawn; yet nothing would banish from his mind the vision of what was there, or stay the recurrent waves of horror it brought him. With Judith the silences became longer, but always there followed the convulsion of grief that would not be repressed, yet could find no utterance.

By and by the man of the law came, made his survey, asked his questions. While he spoke his few words to Judith, Wistar went into the house, and stood where he could still guard the door, unseeing and unseen. Toward midnight came another man, clothed in black, and with a black hand bag containing the tools of his trade—the trade which men do not name except in grisly jest. Wistar met him at the gate, and all the way to the house walked between him and where Judith lay, his finger to his lips. She made neither sound nor motion. By and by—hours later, it seemed—the man came forth again, and Wistar went with him as before. In all the interval Judith had made no sound. But when the man was gone she sobbed aloud, her face to the ground. And Wis-

tar knew that, as she had lain there, tense and silent, she had seen it all with the eyes of the mind.

Then came the bitterest hours of his vigil, in which little by little, in the intervals of grief and horror, his heart spoke to him, at first in vague intimations, formless and uncomprehended, and then in self-accusation, definite and overpowering. When he had said to Judith, such a little while ago as time is measured, that he also had been to blame, he had only indulged in the luxury of magnanimous self-accusation. He did not, even now, convict himself of any conscious wrong. But there are sins of the mind as there are sins of the heart, and the evil they do is as deep, and often more lasting.

He had been ignorant of the world about him, of the world of which he was a part; and, when he had been forced to recognize that world, he had still disdained it. At the outset, the situation had lain in his hands. But he had turned his back on those whose outlook was wider than his own, and so the opportunity, which he might have used to such high account, had been diverted by a more skillful hand to evil ends. And so it had come to this—a wise and amiable father in the room above, and a daughter here, shielded from the too passionate promptings of filial love by the hand red with destruction. A few hours, and Judith must never see him again.

And all the time—beneath, beyond, within his pity for her and his own remorse—was something vague and uncomprehended, yet insistent and overpowering. It brushed upon his cheek, tingled ecstatically in his fingers, fluttered caressingly about the tips of his ears. It was in the first gray light of dawn that he knew it for what it was. She had held her hands in his with light-hearted endearment; she had put her cheek against his own in mockery; she had flouted him with a soft little tug on his ear. She was a girl who could be comrades with a man, and she had taken him to her frank, brave heart. Never, never could he forget that. And always as he remembered it, he must remember also this ultimate hour.

He rose to his feet in anguish, and gazed upon her face, turned away from him. She had fallen asleep at last, he saw, every sense extinguished by the excess of what she had endured. In any young face the outline of cheek and chin is a line of beauty, though often void of expression. In hers it had all the softness, all the sweet opulence of full-blooded health, and besides the little, individual crinkle of her eye, at once grave and caressing, the wreathing of her mouth that was mocking and also tender.

For, as the daylight strengthened, he saw that in her sleep she was smiling. He would not have supposed that there was anything left for him to

suffer; but that smile, joyous, serene, beatific, and the thought of what she must wake to, had a pang more poignant still. His knees bent beneath him, and he fell to the ground beside her, his chest heaving uncontrollably, hot tears streaming from his eyes.

With a little start she awoke. The smile vanished, and she turned a questioning glance upon him.

"Is it true?" she asked, in a sudden fear. "Just now I dreamed—that it had all been only a dream!" For a moment more she looked at him, questioning, unconvinced. Then all the intimate, varied lines of her face contracted to one note of woe. Again she cried out as she had cried in the first awful moment of her discovery.

In obedience to an impulse that was stronger than reverence for her, stronger than remorse, he took her in his arms.

"You poor child!" was all he could say, and he said it again and again.

In a passion of grief and tenderness she threw her arms about him, and strained him to her breast.

"Jim, Jim!" she sobbed, repeating her new name for him over and over.

She buried her face in his and sobbed afresh. And now, for the first time, the utterance of her grief was full and brought relief.

For a moment he endured it. Then, gently, he put her from him. In another instant she must remember even him. It would have been braver, perhaps, to grant her this moment of solace to the full. But he did not deem it so; and, crushed as he was, there was one depth of injury of which he did not wish her to believe him capable.

Yet still she clung to his hands. "What is it?" she said, by and by, reading pain in his eyes.

"You forget—what I am. I wouldn't have stayed by you—I couldn't—except that you needed me!"

She remembered now, and the horror of it came back into her eyes. But the measure she took to banish the sight of him was to bury her face again on his shoulder and with a more convulsive tenderness. "You tried—tried in all ways to save him! Let me love you! You are all I have!"

Again her grief returned upon her, and she shook violently beneath it. But even as she did so she held him closer in her arms.

By and by she was calmer, and in a brief interval of silence they heard the birds singing. The chirrups of daylight in the woodland, even the sweet and penetrating cadence of evensong, are only a tiny rivulet to the floods of melody in which robin and thrush in concert, lark, field sparrow and wren, greet the day reborn. The liquid notes

soothed and caressed them; and, little by little, brought the strength of life and its courage.

She released him, her face brave and composed. "I am ready now," she said.

He understood and, rising, lifted her to her feet. Supporting each other, they went indoors. The thing that had haunted them both all through the night lay in the bed, still and pale. But the expression of the face was composed, resigned.

She laid the weight of her arm upon his shoulder, and he knelt with her, hand in hand, while she uttered a brief prayer, so framed as to include them both in one, a prayer to God and to her father. Then she arose and, for the first time, she kissed him.

And then, for the first time, he kissed her.

"We can bear it now," she said—"we two, together."

CHAPTER XLII

WISTAR'S return to affairs was made easier by the feeling that he had a duty of piety toward the thing which Mr. Sears had held so dear. In the eyes of the business world, he found, it had needed only the news of the old man's despair to change an uneasy conjecture into certainty. It was soon the general belief that the successful career of the combination had come to an end. In a sudden panic, the stock tumbled.

Wistar came to the rescue with as full a statement of the case as the circumstance permitted, and backed up his hopeful augury by buying largely of the floods of stock that poured upon the market. But the memory of his recent operation was too fresh to allow his word, or even what he did, to pass at its face value. It took time and persistent and enormous buying to check the panic.

His former sales of the stock on a rising market had, grotesquely enough, left him many millions the richer, and, at the present low quotations, his holdings swelled until it was now clearly possible for him to buy a majority, or at least enough to

make him master of the situation. He was himself scarcely aware of what this implied when the public awoke to it.

One day the reporters came to him and plied him with questions as to the events leading up to Mr. Sears's death. He paused a moment before answering, as his custom was, and then another moment, and another. Presently he realized in horror that there was nothing he could say: he saw what he had done as the world was beginning to see it. He had wrecked the company, and out of the wreckage he had built it up again, with himself in supreme control and possessed of the millions of his enemies and of the speculative public.

He took the discovery to Judith, fearful of what she might think of him. She said nothing, but burst into laughter—the first since she had worn black.

In the early months of their married life it was a never-failing source of delight to her to call him a company-wrecker, and she learned to make the word a climax to a series of horrid epithets. So she continued to mock and distress him till their son was born.

Then, when she had found the name for his latest unpremeditated achievement, "Is it true," he pleaded, "that the father of James Wistar, Jr., is a speculator, a market-rigger, a company-wrecker?"

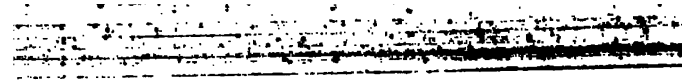
"No, Jim," she said, and only those who have the love of useful invective can value her sacrifice, "you are only a poor, but honest, cave man."

"You can't make me mad with that name," he retorted, "when you are the cave maiden."

She looked a while into the round, staring eyes of James Wistar, Jr. Then, with an inscrutable, happy smile, she said: "Am I?"

(6)

THE END



THE LEADING NOVEL OF TODAY.

The Fighting Chance.

By ROBERT W. CHAMBERS. Illustrated by A. B. Wenzell. 12mo. Ornamental Cloth, $1.50.

In "The Fighting Chance" Mr. Chambers has taken for his hero, a young fellow who has inherited with his wealth a craving for liquor. The heroine has inherited a certain rebelliousness and dangerous caprice. The two, meeting on the brink of ruin, fight out their battles, two weaknesses joined with love to make a strength. It is refreshing to find a story about the rich in which all the women are not sawdust at heart, nor all the men satyrs. The rich have their longings, their ideals, their regrets, as well as the poor; they have their struggles and inherited evils to combat. It is a big subject, painted with a big brush and a big heart.

"After 'The House of Mirth' a New York society novel has to be very good not to suffer fearfully by comparison. 'The Fighting Chance' is very good and it does not suffer."—*Cleveland Plain Dealer.*

"There is no more adorable person in recent fiction than Sylvia Landis."—*New York Evening Sun.*

"Drawn with a master hand."—*Toledo Blade.*

"An absorbing tale which claims the reader's interest to the end."—*Detroit Free Press.*

"Mr. Chambers has written many brilliant stories, but this is his masterpiece."—*Pittsburg Chronicle Telegraph.*

D. APPLETON AND COMPANY, NEW YORK.

A MASTERPIECE OF FICTION.

The Guarded Flame.

By W. B. MAXWELL, Author of "Vivien." Cloth, $1.50.

"'The Guarded Flame, by W. B. Maxwell, is a book to challenge the attention of the reading public as a remarkable study of moral law and its infraction. Mr. Maxwell is the son of Miss M. E. Braddon (Mrs. John Maxwell), whose novels were famous a generation ago, and his first book 'Vivien' made the English critics herald him as a new force in the world of letters. 'The Guarded Flame' is an even more astonishing production, a big book that takes rank with the most important fiction of the year. It is not a book for those who read to be amused or to be entertained. It touches the deepest issues of life and death."
—*Albany Argus.*

"The most powerfully written book of the year."
—*The Independent.*

"'The Guarded Flame' is receiving high praise from the critics everywhere."—*Chicago Record-Herald.*

"This is a book which cannot fail to make its mark."
—*Detroit News.*

"Great novels are few and the appearance of one at any period must give the early reviewer a thrill of discovery. Such a one has come unheralded; but from a source whence it might have been confidently expected. The author is W. B. Maxwell, son of the voluminous novelist known to the world as Miss Braddon. His novel is entitled 'The Guarded Flame.'"—*Philadelphia Press.*

"The books of W. B. Maxwell are essentially for thinkers."—*St. Louis Post-Dispatch.*

D. APPLETON AND COMPANY, NEW YORK.

BY LLOYD OSBOURNE.

Three Speeds Forward.

Uniquely illustrated with full-page illustrations, head and tail pieces and many sketches by Karl Anderson and H. D. Williams. Ornamental Cloth, $1.00.

"'Three Speeds Forward' is an amusing automobile story by Lloyd Osbourne, in which the ostensible teller of what happened is the girl heroine. A little runabout is the important factor in the love romance. The book is prettily bound and printed and is illustrated."—*Toledo Blade.*

"'Three Speeds Forward,' by Lloyd Osbourne, is a very brief and most agreeable novelette dealing with modern society and the chug-chug wagon."—*Philadelphia Inquirer.*

"The climax of this story is original and most humorous. The action is rapid and consistent with the subject in hand. Altogether it is a most enjoyable little volume, well illustrated and attractively bound."
—*Milwaukee Sentinel.*

"It is a bright and sprightly little story, very strongly flavored with gasoline, but quite readable. It is attractively and characteristically illustrated."—*New York Times.*

Wild Justice.

Illustrated. Ornamental Cloth, $1.50.

"Lloyd Osbourne's stories of the South Sea Islands are second only to Stevenson's on the same theme. 'Wild Justice' is a volume of these short stories, beginning with that strong and haunting tale, 'The Renegade.' These are stories which will bear reading more than once. They have an atmosphere that it is restful to breathe, once in a while, to the dwellers in cities and the toilers of these Northern lands where life is such a stern affair."—*Denver Post.*

"Mr. Lloyd Osbourne's nine stories of the South Sea Islands ('Wild Justice') are told with a Kiplingesque vigor, and well illustrate their title. All are eminently readable—not overweighted with tragedy, as is the wont of tales that deal with the remote regions of the earth."
—*New York Times.*

"Mr. Osbourne in 'Wild Justice' has given us a series of stories about the Samoan Islands and their islanders and their white invaders, visitors and conquerors which are vivid with humor and pathos."
—*New York Herald.*

D. APPLETON AND COMPANY, NEW YORK.

TWO CHARMING STORIES.

The Little King of Angel's Landing.

By ELMORE ELLIOTT PEAKE. Illustrated. Cloth, $1.25.

This is a story of a plucky little cripple of indomitable energy and perseverance. How, boy-like, he forms an ideal love for his school teacher and wins a great voting contest for her; how he patiently saves his pennies to get himself "fixed"; how his faithful dog is killed and the shock it brings to the frail little soul; how he struggles onward, upward, and at last comes into his birthright—all these are incidents of a story the kindly humor and infinite pathos of which are deeply appealing.

"There are tears and smiles in every chapter of 'The Little King of Angel's Landing.'"—*Denver Post.*

"There is a mighty human interest—a something that takes hold of your heart and sometimes hurts it a bit, but which presently makes you correspondingly glad—in 'The Little King of Angel's Landing.'"
—*Cincinnati Times-Star.*

The House of Hawley.

By ELMORE ELLIOTT PEAKE. Ornamental Cloth, $1.50.

"'The House of Hawley,' by Elmore Elliott Peake, is one of the 'homiest' stories we have met in a long while. . . . Instead of calling so often for the great American novel, perhaps we should give more attention to the many good American novels, of which 'The House of Hawley' is one, containing faithful and interesting portrayal of life in some one of the many and diversified sections of the country."
—*New York Globe.*

"There is not a dull page in the whole book. It is well worth reading."—*St. Louis Star.*

"'The House of Hawley' is a fresh, readable story by Elmore Elliott Peake, the theme of which is laid in the 'Egypt' of southern Illinois. The title fits better than usual, and the characters depicted are real people. There is not a single stick of dead timber among the various men and women."—*Chicago Record-Herald.*

D. APPLETON AND COMPANY, NEW YORK.

A ROMANCE OF THE CIVIL WAR.

The Victory.

By MOLLY ELLIOTT SEAWELL, author of "The Chateau of Montplaisir," "The Sprightly Romance of Marsac," etc. Illustrated. Cloth, $1.50.

"With so delicate a touch and appreciation of the detail of domestic and plantation life, with so wise comprehension of the exalted and sometimes stilted notions of Southern honor and with humorous depiction of African fidelity and bombast to interest and amuse him, it only gradually dawns on a reader that 'The Victory' is the truest and most tragic presentation yet before us of the rending of home ties, the awful passions, the wounded affections personal and national, and the overwhelming questions of honor which weighed down a people in the war of son against father and brother against brother."—*Hartford Courant.*

"Among the many romances written recently about the Civil War, this one by Miss Seawell takes a high place. . . . Altogether, 'The Victory,' a title significant in several ways, makes a strong appeal to the lover of a good tale."
—*The Outlook.*

"Miss Seawell's narrative is not only infused with a tender and sympathetic spirit of romance and surcharged with human interests, but discloses, in addition, careful and minute study of local conditions and characteristic mannerisms. It is an intimate study of life on a Virginia plantation during an emergent and critical period of American history."—*Philadelphia North American.*

"It is one of the romances that make, by spirit as well as letter, for youth and high feeling. It embodies, perhaps, the best work this author yet has done."—*Chicago Record-Herald.*

"Aside from the engaging story itself and the excellent manner in which it is told there is much of historic interest in this vivid word-picture of the customs and manners of a period which has formed the background of much fiction."
—*Brooklyn Citizen.*

D. APPLETON AND COMPANY, NEW YORK.

BY H. B. MARRIOTT WATSON.

A Midsummer Day's Dream.

Ornamental Cloth, $1.50.

"Since Harland's 'The Cardinal's Snuff Box' there has been nothing to equal its clever and graceful merriment."
—*New York Times.*

"A delightful bit of romantic foolery."
—*New York Evening Post.*

"A very beautiful story, in which Mr. Watson has employed his gifts in the employment of language and the telling of a tale to excellent advantage."
—*St. Louis Globe-Democrat.*

"The little tale is graceful to a degree, witty past expectation, and pervaded with an illusive spirit of poetry. It is nonsense 'but quite precious nonsense,' as Bunthorne used to say."—*Chicago Tribune.*

Twisted Eglantine.

Illustrated. Ornamental Cloth, $1.50.

This is the history of a love affair of a famous English beau in the time of George IV. The heroine is a ravishingly beautiful country girl, with whom the beau becomes infatuated. By the aid of her country lover she is rescued from the wiles of the fashionable dandy, and his schemes are thwarted.

"The story is on a high plane; it is a romance which is entirely free from the melodramatic quality; in a word, a novel that will enhance the author's reputation as a writer of fiction of far more than ordinary attainments."—*Brooklyn Eagle.*

"He has presented to us the only living beau we have met this many a year; and where so many hundreds have failed, to say this is the highest compliment we can pay his book."
—*The Outlook.*

D. APPLETON AND COMPANY, NEW YORK.

By the Author of "THE SILENCE OF DEAN MAITLAND."

The Great Refusal.

By MAXWELL GRAY. Cloth, $1.50.

"The Great Refusal" is the refusal of the son, a man of mind, to continue in the career mapped out for him by the father, a man of money. The whole theme of the novel is whether wealth is to be a means of luxury or a stepping-stone to social service and the alleviation of distress.

"It is a story full of contrast and color, a brilliant picture."—*Brooklyn Eagle.*

"The lesson of the book is unmistakable, the atmosphere pleasing, the style always graceful and sometimes poetic. There is no lack of varied, effective action, and many of the conversations are noteworthy."—*Chicago Record-Herald.*

"When Maxwell Gray gave to the world the celebrated novel 'The Silence of Dean Maitland,' critics wondered if such a gifted writer would one day strike a purer, clearer note. She has just done so in issuing 'The Great Refusal,' a novel of self-sacrifice. No more uplifting book of its kind has appeared since Besant's 'All Sorts and Conditions of Men' emphasized the lesson that we do not live only for ourselves and that we can fulfill a high ideal in bettering the condition of our fellow-men."—*Portland Oregonian.*

D. APPLETON AND COMPANY, NEW YORK.

A GREAT ROMANTIC NOVEL.

The Reckoning.

By ROBERT W. CHAMBERS. Illustrated by Henry Hutt. $1.50.

"A thrilling and engrossing tale."—*New York Sun.*

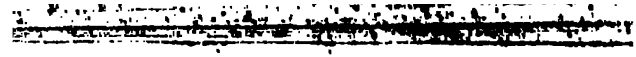
"When we say that the new work is as good as 'Cardigan' it is hardly necessary to say more."—*The Dial.*

"Robert Chambers' books recommend themselves. 'The Reckoning' is one of his best and will delight lovers of good novels."—*Boston Herald.*

"It is an exceedingly fine specimen of its class, worthy of its predecessors and a joy to all who like plenty of swing and spirit."
—*London Bookman.*

"Robert W. Chambers' stories of the revolutionary period in particular show a care in historic detail that put them in a different class from the rank and file of colonial novels."—*Book News.*

"A stirring tale well told and absorbing. It is not a book to forget easily and it will for many throw new light on a phase of revolutionary history replete with interest and appeal."
—*Chicago Record-Herald.*

"Chambers' bullets whistle almost audibly in the pages; when a twig snaps, as twigs do perforce in these chronicles, you can almost feel the presence of the savage buck who snaps it. Then there are situations of force and effect everywhere through the pages, an intensity of action, a certain naturalness of dialogue and 'human nature' in the incidents. But over all is the glamor of the Chambers fancy, the gauzy woof of an artist's imagination which glories in tints, in poesies, in the little whims of the brush and pencil, so that you have just a pleasant reminder of unreality and a glimpse of the author himself here and there to vary the interest."
—*St. Louis Republic.*

D. APPLETON AND COMPANY, NEW YORK.